

[NET HUNTERS]

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Unlike the *molimo*, however, the *elima* usually calls for the joint participation of men and women both in song and in dance, which in this context are essentially means of religious expression. This joint participation is in no way connected with that aspect of the *elima* that involves the formal deflowering of the young maiden.

The *molimo*, as practiced by the net hunters, both from the Putnam material and from my own field notes, is strikingly different in manifestation from the description given by Schebesta (1952, 278) of the archers' *toré* association. I mention above the fact that the Putnam material places far more weight on the religious than on the social function of the *molimo*. We have also seen that participation in the *nkumbi* does not necessarily entitle the young Mbuti to take part in the *molimo* proceedings. The *molimo* is essentially an association of adult males; an adult male is a hunter, and one does not become a hunter by being circumcised and learning a number of village songs and dances.

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The physical discipline and training in the *nkumbi* camp undoubtedly toughen the body, and the boy emerges, even after a short *nkumbi* of two months' duration, very much more adult than on his entry (see my separate account, 1957, of the *nkumbi*). But as far as the Mbuti are concerned, he is still a child, until he has proved himself a hunter. As he grows older, he is allowed to sit with the men in the evenings and gradually to take part in their conversation and some of their activities. He may even be allowed to sit nearby as they sing songs of the *molimo*, but not to take full part. Mrs. Putnam, however, believes that the *nkumbi* does entitle the boy to partial membership, at least, in the *molimo*. She holds this opinion because of her personal knowledge that certain boys who previously were secluded with the womenfolk in their huts during *molimo* proceedings, as she was herself, were not secluded following their *nkumbi* initiation. As a woman, however, she was unable to witness the *molimo* itself, except for some dances she caught sight of by chance. My own material indicates that anyone who has been acclaimed as a hunter is allowed to take full part in the association's proceedings and that there are *nkumbi* initiates who are not considered as hunters and who are definitely barred from full participation. The Putnam material demonstrates the close relation of hunting skill

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575 to status in the band and the fact that young  
• 561 men, as yet unmarried, who have displayed  
88 particular prowess as hunters may take a prom-  
[554] inent part in *molimo* activities. In the absence  
[224] of any detailed information on formal initiation  
into the *molimo*, we can at least say with some  
certainty, from the available material, that  
among the net hunters membership is associa-  
ted primarily with hunting skill.

575 With regard to the proceedings of the associ-  
796 ation, all reports from this district indicate that  
the *molimo* is held only on occasions of the  
greatest importance to the community: various  
crises, and particularly death. A fuller account  
is given elsewhere (Turnbull, 1960b, 307-340);  
a summary is given here.

534 The word *molimo* is used to denote the asso-  
[192] ciation, its proceedings, and a musical instru-  
ment. Only one instrument is reported by the  
Putnams as being used—the *molimo* trumpet.  
But Anne Putnam, in her notes, mentions hav-  
ing heard the trumpet one night and thinking  
that it sounded very different from the one she  
had heard some months previously. It is possi-  
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mutually dependent and equally important role in this, the major activity of the Mbuti. Archery, on the other hand, may be conducted on a familial basis or, as is described by Schebesta, with the cooperation of two or three men. It is not essentially cooperative, and it does not include women and children, so placing the sexes in different relationships with the forest. In so far as hunting is the "superior" economic activity (though economically perhaps less important than gathering), it emphasizes the disparity of status between the sexes.

3. The net hunt, demanding close cooperation and lack of specialization, is associated with a more egalitarian political system than that of the archers. While Schebesta described an embryonic chieftainship, with powerful lineage heads, Putnam vigorously denies the existence of even a council of elders. Further, according to Putnam, whereas an old man is treated with respect, he is so only if age is accompanied by wisdom. A great hunter is respected regardless of his age. An unmarried boy of 16 who kills a buffalo with a spear is entitled to have a net of his own and to take full part in the meetings of the men's religious association. Such leadership as exists among the net hunters is charismatic, with little emphasis on lineage—a position quite the reverse of that described by Schebesta for the archers.

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 172 sleep in the *baraza* of the villagers rather than in the village camp).  
 182 The nuclear family is further disrupted by the fact that a wife may  
 621 well seize the opportunity of being in the village to leave her husband  
 593 and visit her own *apers* in another village.  
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 [608] Men and women of quite different ages who would normally, in  
 [571] the forest, be separated for most aspects of daily life may find them-  
 selves thrown together. Young and old are quite likely to find them-  
 selves eating together on the same *baraza*, helping to build the same  
 182 house, even joining in the same erotic dance. Sex differentiations that  
 621 pertain in the forest do not necessarily pertain in the village, where,  
 56 for instance, Mbuti men do the housebuilding, not the women, and  
 462 where the women are most effectively the "hunters" and food pro-  
 ducers.

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 648 It is only, as stated, when the two worlds of the forest and the  
 621 village impinge upon each other that the Mbuti in the village camp  
 186 show any sense of identity as a unit. Those who belong to the same  
 hunting band will then cluster together around the same campfire,  
 and if the issue involves a return to the forest, then quickly the village  
 camp begins to assume, so far as possible, the composition and char-  
 acteristics of a forest camp. Forest relationships between individuals  
 and families are gradually reestablished, and at the same time village  
 relationships are gradually abandoned. This inevitably meets with  
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 648 concerted opposition on the part of the villagers, who offer threats  
 166 and bribes to maintain the precarious and temporary relationship just  
 563 established. But with no effective means of control there is nothing  
 [431] they can do but accept the departure of "their" Mbuti with as much  
 good grace as they can muster. Those who are wise make presents of  
 plantains and manioc. Those who do not are likely to have their  
 plantations robbed.

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 533 The imminence of a mass return of Mbuti to the forest is fre-  
 186 quently marked a night or two before it takes place by the singing  
 621 in the village camp of hunting songs or, on special occasions, of the  
 lesser *molimo* songs, late at night when all the villagers will have re-  
 tired. This is a sure sign that the forest world is asserting itself, for  
 forest songs are generally considered as sacred, and not to be profaned  
 by performance in the village. They would never be sung in the true  
 village, and only in the Mbuti village camp when they wish to convert  
 the context to a forest context. The forest, it must be remembered,  
 is physically always within sight and, perhaps more important as far  
 as song is concerned, within earshot. It may, indeed, be no more than

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181 the economic and political life, and even in the religious life of the  
611 Mbuti, who are supremely concerned with the present.

601 The effective kinship terminology at once reflects the situation,  
which only becomes confused when any attempt is made to relate the  
terms to their usage in village society. It distinguishes generations  
rather than kin, and cuts indiscriminately across actual kinship bound-  
aries. Through its effective organization of the band into age groups,  
• [561] it emphasizes the economic basis of band unity rather than any kin-  
ship bonds. The only terms in general usage in the Epulu region, and  
among the Mbuti bands to the east-west extremes of the Bira-speaking  
net-hunting territory, are as follows:

|              |                              |                           |
|--------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Grandparent: | <i>tata</i>                  | for address and reference |
| Father:      | <i>epa</i>                   | for address and reference |
| Mother:      | <i>ema</i>                   | for address and reference |
| Sibling:     | <i>apua'i</i> or <i>moko</i> | for address and reference |

(*apua'i* is used rather than *moko*, though its connotation is one of  
close friendship)

|        |             |                          |
|--------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Child: | <i>miki</i> | for address or reference |
|--------|-------------|--------------------------|

Except at the parental level, there is generally no sex differentia-  
tion. At times it seems that *taté* is used for grandmother, *tata* for  
grandfather. Similarly, *amua'i* is a possible variant to denote a fe-  
male sibling. But as frequently, if not more so, and more consistently,  
I found *tata* and *apua'i* used for either sex. Differentiation is also  
made, if necessary, by adding the terms used for boy or girl—*moko* or  
*kali*, respectively. Thus *miki a moko* is a boy child; *miki a kali* is a girl  
child. There is also a way of distinguishing the younger from the  
older: *vomia* is older, *motoa* is younger, but the Mbuti generally only  
couple these designations to kinship terms in direct imitation of the  
village usage and only in village contexts.

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601 Bira terminology, with minor dialectal variations, is similar to the  
above, but with the addition of terms such as *noko* for mother's  
brother; *kola* for father's sister; *om-epa* and *mot-epa* for the older and  
younger brother of the father; and *om-ema* and *mot-ema* for the older  
and younger sister of the mother. The Bira call an older brother  
*homioné*, an older sister *alwané*, and a younger brother or sister  
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601 simply *moto*. The Mbuti normally refer to their father's sister simply  
as *ema* ("mother"), but if trying to refer to her for the benefit of

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villagers, instead of using the appropriate village term, *kola*, they are apt to bring in the concept of relative age and specify *alwa'e na epa* or *moto e na epa*. For, not themselves distinguishing between cross and parallel relationships, the Mbuti see that the villagers refer to their mother's sisters according to their relative age (*om-ema* or *mot-ema*), and to the Mbuti this age differential is of recognizable significance.

In their own usage, however, their father's sisters and their mother's sisters are all equally *ema*; as are indeed any unrelated females who fall into that age group. So with other terms, for with the Mbuti age rather than kinship is the determining factor. I have known a man with a brother much younger than he refer to him as *miki*, and the younger brother refer to his older brother as *epa*. The older brother at that time was a married man and a great hunter; the younger brother was single and not yet a net-owner and not a great hunter. Their activities were therefore different, and each assumed the "kinship" term that included him in his appropriate economic age group.

There are appropriate corresponding structural differences between villagers and Mbuti; for instance, an orphaned child among the villagers is taken in by his father's brothers, with precedence being given to the older brother. Among the Mbuti a child may be adopted by any "father" or "mother," which effectively means anyone of the same age group as his biological parents. Generally a boy or girl goes to live with his mother and her natal family if his father dies, and stays with his father, living with one of his father's married brothers, if his mother dies. This is assuming that the marriage has been patrilocal; if it has been matrilineal, as it frequently is, the reverse applies. But in every case there is great freedom of choice, and each instance is decided according to the context of the moment.

It is plain, then, that the personal terminology of the Mbuti stresses their relative age and economic status rather than their kinship, and both for address and reference it is used mostly in economic contexts, personal names being most widely used in other contexts. The only time that biological kinship becomes an important factor in discussion is in connection with sex and marriage. Relationships are then spelled out and traced through the "stomachs" from which the individuals concerned are born. People who are related through the stomachs of their mother or of their father's mother may not marry or have extramarital sexual relationships. This is the one and only

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582 stated and observed rule of incest, and although genealogical mem-  
835 ories are short, never rising further than two above ego, it is adequate  
611 in preventing the marriage of first cousins.<sup>7</sup> This seems to be about  
the limit of the intended restriction, as at this level flirtation, ac-  
companied by sexual intercourse, may take place with only nominal  
disapproval. The disapproval becomes more loudly voiced if the young  
couple seem to be forming too strong an affection for each other,  
such as would normally lead to marriage.

835 There is some expressed disapproval, of about the same degree of  
[832] seriousness, if children of the same social mother, but not of the same  
stomach, flirt with each other, but such flirtations happen.

I found it impossible to discover a single admitted instance of incest  
closer than between first cousins, but there is some evident restraint  
between brothers and sisters, none between mothers and sons, little  
[578] between fathers and daughters. To swear at someone by accusing  
them of having sex with their parent is mild; it is more serious to  
accuse them of having sex with their sibling of one stomach. Worst  
of all is to accuse someone of having sex with her or his spouse.  
[758] (The degree of freedom between sons and mothers may be seen in the  
[855] fact that a mother gives strength to her children, if they are ill, by  
sleeping in the same bed with them. This is sometimes done between  
a mother and her adult son, so long as he is unmarried, without oc-  
casioneing any comment.)

[602] Together with this lack of emphasis on the biological aspects of  
[601] kinship and the accompanying generational system of terminology  
goes a lack of formal restrictions on behavior between different kin  
categories, and a marked unwillingness to clearly define kin relation-  
[611] ships between individuals. One suspects at times that the apparent  
shortness of genealogical memory is almost deliberate, for not only  
would such memory have no use, it would, in fact, undermine the  
whole delicate balance of social relationships among the Mbuti.

## •561 AGE GROUPS

601 Table 6 shows quite clearly the effective difference between the vil-  
lage system and the system of the Mbuti, granting that they both  
share the same terminology. The fact that among the Mbuti all mem-

[572] <sup>7</sup> It is often stated generally that one marries nobody related through either the fa-  
ther's or the mother's line, but in special situations the restriction is narrowed down as  
given here.

<sup>A</sup> [see page 328 -- Analyst]

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bers of each age level may be *apua'i* to each other doubly underlines 561  
the importance of this age grouping as a structural principle of their 601  
society, because it not only effectively allies members of the same  
age group, but it cuts across any unilineal descent pattern. Even  
though, if pressed, any one *apua'i* can and will trace his relationship  
to almost any other, through either cognatic or affinal lines, among  
themselves this is never done. The functions of the age group, also,  
have little to do with kinship.

The age group forms the next unit above the nuclear family, each 561  
having its own functions and its own sphere of authority. Above the 621  
age group one might consider the band to be divided into alliances 857  
of age groups, though their function would be less easy to define. 873  
However, such alliances do take place, generally in major disputes,  
where youths and children might ally against hunters and elders. Char- (192)  
acteristically, disputes concerning premarital sexual activity, betrothal (578)  
and *bopi* (playground) activity are the major occasions for such al-  
liances. But the same element may be seen at work during the religi- (765)  
ous *molimo* festival, where the group of adult men that sing around  
a fire at night may divide the hearth into two or three fires. The un-  
married youths nearly always have one fire for themselves around  
which they dance their erotic dances; the hunters (the younger mar-  
ried men) may have a fire of their own, or they may join the *mangesé*,  
the elders, men who are no longer as active in the hunt as they used  
to be.

Young married couples are held responsible for reproduction, but 574  
only to a limited extent for the rearing and education of their chil- 561  
dren, for beyond the age of three or four a child becomes the responsi- (855)  
bility of the band as a whole. As an economic unit the family is  
divided into the appropriate age groups as a co-operative part of the  
total band. Effectively much of its economic activity is directly for its  
own individual benefit, but there is nearly always some sharing even  
when there is no necessity for sharing, to emphasize the communal  
rights to forest produce. As a political unit the family only has in-  
ternal jurisdiction of the most minimal kind. The punishment of a  
wife or a child, or the complaint of a child about its parents, quickly  
becomes a matter for communal discussion. As a religious unit the  
family is of little significance indeed. But every nuclear family is ex-  
pected to participate in religious festivals, as symbolized when the  
*molimo* hearth is made up by taking embers from every family hearth,  
and when a camp is moved each family carefully takes an ember from

594 its own hearth to kindle its own fire in the new camp. The responsi-  
621 bility of members of a nuclear family in times of crisis, such as birth,  
puberty, marriage and death, does not differ much from the responsi-  
bility of the band as a whole, the difference being one of degree or  
intensity.

- 561 The age group functions as a major institution of education, in-  
86 structing the group junior to it in its ways, preparing it for advance  
to the next, their own, level. Thus the care and education of children  
rests largely with youths and the oldest of the elders. Youths and  
hunters depend on each other in the joint hunting and gathering  
activities, the youths learning from their mothers and fathers all they  
will soon need to know as hunters themselves. Hunters gradually as-  
sociate more and more with the *mungesi* (literally, "the great ones")  
around the evening fires, to listen to the talk of the elders and, in time,  
to participate.

561 As an economic unit the age group is of supreme importance. Chil-  
857 dren scavenge and help supply their own needs through fishing, trap-  
883 ping, snaring and any other forms of collecting or hunting within  
[476] their means. In this they may at times be helped by the youths. The  
youths are of vital importance to the hunt, the girls acting as beaters  
with their mothers, and also collecting, while the boys stand guard  
at the extremities of the circle of nets, having assisted in setting up  
the nets. Youths may also be expected to perform a number of chores  
such as fetching wood and water into the camp. The hunters are the  
prime unit responsible for the sustenance of the band; the *mungesi*  
are absolved from such responsibilities and may expect to be fed,  
housed and clothed by the younger age groups.

561 Politically each age group has informal jurisdiction over its mem-  
626 bers, utilizing ridicule and ostracism, sometimes driving a member  
627 to seek acceptance in the lower age level, or justification by the up-  
per. For a lower age level to ridicule or ostracize a member of a higher  
level is a supreme condemnation and a most powerful sanction. Fur-  
[765] ther, it will be seen that part of the *molimo* festival is a morning  
tour of the camp by the youths, carrying the *molimo* trumpet and  
disguised by leaves and branches, at which time they single out the  
hut of any troublemaker, however young or old, and threaten to tear  
it to pieces. Even if there is no such troublemaker, the youths will  
go from hut to hut stripping a few leaves off the roof of each, causing  
other minor damage, simply representing the accepted principle of  
authority, of law and order.

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Youths also have considerable say in the settling of any dispute concerning betrothal, though ultimately it is the *mangesé* who decide such matters. The hunters control all activities concerning the hunt and the movement of camp. The *mangesé* act as general arbiters and are effectively a court of final appeal, their age entitling them to unquestioning respect. Particularly in matters concerning betrothal are the *mangesé* consulted, for their genealogical memory can be stretched to suit the occasion. And in the *molimo* festival, as in the *elimo*, they share the honors with the youths: the hunters have to do most of the work, supplying the food and cooking it for the nightly or daily feasting, but the singing and dancing, which are central to the festivals, are led by the *mangesé* and the youths.

In matters concerning relationship with other bands, the band as a whole, rather than any age group or association of age groups, decides the issue. On such occasions even children will sit by and take part.

We have already mentioned some of the religious functions of the age groups, in association with their political functions, and it will be seen that the two are closely interconnected. It might just be pointed out here that in a *molimo* festival held for the death of an Mbuti, age-group and band membership take precedence over family membership. The youths will lead the dancing, and the leading youth will lead because he is the best dancer, not because he is related to the dead person. Similarly with the singing led by the *mangesé*. The *molimo* horn may be supplied by anyone. The person who sings into it is generally a youth, though sometimes a young hunter, again regardless of kinship but on account of his renown and ability as a singer.

Considering the very clear roles of the age groups, and their comprehensive nature, it is plain that any unilineal system of descent would be highly disruptive. The loose laws of marriage and adoption, which are permissive rather than prescriptive, preferential or prohibitive, and the nonlineal nature of band composition allow for the flexibility that is obviously necessary to maintain the proper balance of recruitment into each age group.

Although a bilateral recognition of descent does exist and is sometimes utilized to provide the necessary balance of power, it can still hardly be dignified by the term "lineage system." Owing to the nonlineal, territorial nature of band composition, and the frequency of sister exchange, nuclear families may divide or remain united, regardless of lineage, depending upon the context.

621 regardless of lineage, depending upon the context. Affinal ties are con-  
61 sidered just as legitimate, and used just as frequently in balancing  
602 power and in determining allegiance as cognatic ties. In this way  
582 security is guaranteed to any individual because of the number of  
571 recognized social groups to which he can claim membership. This  
ambivalence is again an important structural principle, and is cer-  
tainly manifest in the social groupings observable in the building of  
successive hunting camps.

621 If age rather than kinship fixes one's place within the band, then,  
56 we have to consider how a band maintains any sense of continuity  
from one generation to the next. There is the alliance of age groups  
and the educational role of age groups which provide some degree of  
continuity, but this would not be sufficient in view of what we have  
said about the shifting composition of the band. It is undoubtedly  
territory that gives the band its identity as such and enables that  
identity to persist, and it is to his territory, as to his age group, rather  
than to any kin group, that an Mbuti owes allegiance.

602 Kinship is recognized in assessing problems of inheritance, but  
542 with so little to inherit the problems are minimal. In general a man's  
belongings are divided among his sons or, if his sons are too young,  
they are held in trust for them by his brothers. Similarly with a wom-  
582 an's belongings. Kinship may also be used to maintain an economic  
balance, just as it may be used to maintain a political balance, by  
advancing claims to the spoils of a hunt on the ground of kinship, or  
611 indeed by advancing claims for the adoption of children. But again,  
as such claims are advanced on grounds of both cognatic and affinal  
ties, the principles of unilineal descent are directly contradicted.

621 In fact the nuclear family is best regarded as one of a number of  
594 cells that make up the totality of the band, each cell reflecting the  
same basic structure as the band itself. Within the family the factors  
of territory and age also play a part, the locality of the hut symboliz-  
ing the unity of the family and its separateness from others, the age  
differential dividing the family in activity, authority and allegiance.  
59 Even fission and fusion are a part of family life, as children are apt to  
leave their natal family any time after they reach the age of three or  
four, and either be adopted by or simply live for a while with another  
family in the same band; or they may be adopted by a family in an-  
other band and go to live there, even if their parents continue living  
together in their home band. Such separations within the band do not  
affect their relationship with other members of their family of the

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same age group, and on maturity and marriage the old nuclear family sometimes reaffirms itself as an extended family. The old parents may build a separate hut adjoining the huts of their married children, or even live in the hut of one of their offspring, who will probably build an extension for the purpose. But during adolescence children may well be separated from their biological parents by both time and space. Similarly in adulthood there is not infrequently friction between brothers, sometimes leading to fission within the band.

Finally, in connection with the importance of age as a structural principle, it should be pointed out that the lack of a unilineal system of descent among the Mbuti is associated with a lack of any developed form of ancestor worship. Practices associated with death will be dealt with more fully later; here it need only be said that far from remembering the dead by word or action, the main objective seems to be to forget them. They may never be referred to again, particularly by name, and there is no memorial maintained in their honor, no marked or tended grave site. However, they are by the same token not feared, and insofar as they are remembered at all they are remembered with affection. The concern of the Mbuti is almost exclusively with the present. This is not to say that they deny a past or a future, either in this life or the next; it is merely to say that they believe that by a correct fulfillment of the present, the past and the future will take care of themselves. This correlates with the age-group system and with the dominance and prestige of the two middle groups, the youths and the hunters, for in their hands lies the fulfillment of the present.

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are contradicted every day without necessarily causing any mention, but in the event of anything more serious happening later, the earlier incidents will be recalled and made into an issue that successfully embroils, ultimately, the entire camp.

But more curious than this slight emphasis on normal, or mildly abnormal and trivial patterns is the lack of emphasis at times where one would have thought the occasion to be of major concern to the band. Birth and marriage, for instance, provoke little comment, and concern primarily the nuclear families and not the band. The relationship between these particular attitudes and the nonlinear and fluid composition of the band is plain. The constant movement of families from one band to another, alone, opens up different and important avenues for recruitment that has the advantage of being selective.

With this in mind, let us look first at the daily life of the Mbuti, briefly, for it is of little structural significance, then at the life cycle.

Among both net-hunters and archers five days out of seven are likely to include some hunting. Even though it would be possible for the Mbuti to kill a surplus of game and dry the meat and store it for their own future use, as indeed they do for the benefit of the villagers, such measures are no more to their taste than to their advantage. On a hunting day the family rises at dawn, the mother and her older daughters who are at the age of puberty go to the stream to wash themselves and bring back water for drinking and cooking. The men-folk go to a different part of the stream, and generally slightly later. The older men might be excessively lazy and use the water brought back for drinking as bath water.

While the women cook the light morning meal and set food aside for taking with them on the hunt, the men shake out and inspect their nets, bows and arrows, their sons helping them or simply looking on. If the forest is dry, the hunt may start leaving within an hour of dawn, otherwise it may not leave until midday. Usually it sets off about two hours after sunrise and may return anytime between mid-day and dusk. There is no particular order for leaving the camp, the youths usually go ahead, and not far away they light a fire at the base of a small tree, as an invocation to the forest for a good hunt. Men and women alike stop by the fire on their way, but with no ceremony. It does serve, however, as a place for a more cordial exchange of greetings than generally takes place in the still sleepy camp.

Back in the camp some old grandparents, or maybe only a handful

512 of youths, will be left in charge of the camp and of any children that  
224 elect to stay behind. Any child old enough to make the decision does  
• 561 so himself. If his parents do not want to be bothered with him he  
[855] has a wide range of classificatory mothers and fathers to call on, or if  
he is old enough he will simply join his own age group and set off  
[462] with them. Girls always go with the women; boys go with their fathers, youths may go with their fathers or on their own. If a father has a particularly long net he may welcome an extra spear or bow and arrow nearby, and his adolescent sons serve in this capacity.

224 The hunt is described more fully in Chapter Ten. Here it is only  
561 necessary to point out that among the net-hunters, where a net is  
476 owned by married men or by extremely rare, gifted bachelor hunters  
422 (youths), the hunt effectively divides itself into nuclear family groups  
[594] but not into nuclear families, for each family, during the hunt, is itself divided by age and sex. The family-owned nets stretch out in a long semicircle, end to end, and the women act as beaters, forming a corresponding semicircle opposite. But each net is utterly dependent on the others, as is each beater, and it is the co-operative aspect of the age group that is emphasized, rather than the distinctness of each family. The division of spoils similarly stresses band rather than family values, and the hunting songs and dances that take place after, and sometimes before, the hunt further illustrate that the hunt is considered an affair of the band as a whole.

224 When the hunt returns to camp there is immediate excitement as  
183 those who stayed behind crowd around for tales of all that happened, and maybe for a few tidbits of raw meat. In the confusion, men and women alike, but particularly women, may be seen furtively concealing some of their spoils under the leaves of their roofs, or in empty pots nearby. For although there will have been some sharing on the scene, there is always more back in the camp, and family loyalty is not that subject to band loyalty that there is no cheating.

224 The food is prepared and cooked right away, and while this is being done a hunting dance may take place, in which men and women  
535 and children all take part. This dance is frequently imitative of hunting  
[252] activities, with older people taking the part of the animals hunted.

224 Any unusual event of the day's hunt may be reenacted, and this is  
535 also an occasion where the sanction of ridicule may be applied to any  
626 hunter, male or female, who is considered to have been unsatisfactory. It is not uncommon for a husband to lead a dance ridiculing a wife who, through her laziness as a beater, spoiled his chances.

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her milk dries up and the child is given to someone else to feed, or if it is weaned early, then intercourse is apparently resumed. The third father, however, while acknowledging this to be the accepted pattern, began sleeping with his wife again within a month. This he did even though he had the rare advantage for an Mbuti of having two other wives. His action caused a major dispute. (See p. 207 seq.)

During pregnancy there are no restrictions; sexual activity in early pregnancy is believed to hurry matters along, and during the latter stages is merely considered uncomfortable, and possibly physically injurious to the child and mother.

As the evening settles in, nuclear families sit around their family hearths outside the huts, talking across the camp at each other until they go inside to sleep, or simply lie down to sleep by the fire (the women nearly always sleep inside, but youths and men frequently sleep on their hunting nets either by their own fire or by a central fire). Even when families have retired inside their huts, conversation continues between them. If there is any singing, other than of lullabies, the camp divides into age groups, each building its own fire. Unless there is an *elima* or *molimo* festival, there is no marked division between the sexes.

On retiring for the night family hearths are brought inside the huts, and any central fires are also brought inside unless someone is sleeping by them. When a central fire is broken up, each family tends to take an ember and add it to their own hearth. A fire is not left untended at night. During the night a man may awaken and stoke up a fire, warming himself by the blaze. At such times, when cold, the Mbuti smoke particularly heavily, and as a result they sometimes fall unconscious. They may fall into the fire and suffer serious burns, occasionally fatal, and this is one of the few generally cited causes of accidental death—other than falling from a tree.

On days when the hunt stays in the camp, because of rain or because some dispute has caused a rift, both men and women attend to specific chores. Men repair and add to their nets and make new bows and arrows; the women roll twine and work at basketry. Both may make and decorate bark cloth, a major activity on such a day. A good part of the day is always given to singing, dancing, playing games and storytelling. There is a constant shifting from family groupings to age groupings, but mealtime is the only time when there is a definite emphasis on the nuclear family. Even then, male youths, hunters and elders may take their food to a central fire and

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Another important imitative game is the hunt, in which a youth or an elder pretends to be an antelope, sometimes with another pretending to be a leopard. An old piece of a real hunting net is used, and once again every action is gone through in almost exact imitation of a real hunt. The antelope and the leopard move erratically and unexpectedly to test the reactions of the children, and any child who fails to react properly is laughed out of the game. The game continues up to the ensnarement of the antelope in the net, then abruptly ends and starts again. Different localities in or around the camp are chosen for these mock hunts, to show the necessity for varying the hunting technique. If any Mbuti are keeping chickens for the villagers (this is often done when a camp is near a village, as the villagers have reasons for wishing to conceal their wealth), the chickens often become the quarry. [231]

Girls imitate their mothers by carrying a stick of rough wood as a baby, perhaps in a tiny hide sling. Any girls large enough to carry a real baby do so. They make miniature carrying baskets and go off with other girls on gathering expeditions, always returning with some real food either found in the forest or begged or stolen from the camp. With their hunting and fishing activities as well as this gathering, the children make a small contribution to the food economy even at this age. They also learn not only to rely on their fellow age mates for help in food-getting activities, but to share with them. The sharing is largely left to the girl's decision.

The boys also learn to live and work with their fellows of different families rather than with their nuclear family, and will often be far more intimate with an unrelated boy of the same age than with a brother much older or younger. They play many games that develop quickness of eye and co-ordination of the body, such as the spear practice, where one boy stands in the middle with a large forest fruit at the end of a six foot vine which he swings around him, trailing the fruit about twelve inches above the ground. The other boys stand in a circle around him, their fire-hardened spears poised. As the fruit passes them they throw their spears at it. If they miss they have to dash in to retrieve their spears while the fruit continues to swing around, and other spears continue to be thrown. If a spear hits its mark and holds firm, the boy in the center tries to dislodge it by bouncing the fruit on the ground as he swings it around. This is an additional hazard for the others, as the spear may come flying out at

857 them. Youths join the older children at this game, but never in a  
868  
[883] supervisory capacity.

883 Youths may also join the children on their swings in the *bopi*, and  
561 will almost certainly build their swings for them, climbing high up  
868 into adjacent trees to drape a long liana between them. They then  
882 teach the younger children the wild somersaulting games on these  
swings that are particularly characteristic of the honey season. On  
the other side the youths equally often join the hunters but, again,  
always as a separate group, sometimes participating fully, but still as  
youths. And as youths they continue the process already begun in  
childhood, of growing more away from their nuclear families and  
together as an age group. Their hunting and scavenging abilities are  
greater, and they sometimes even maintain a self-sufficient food econ-  
omy. As youths they are allowed to stay up at night, instead of re-  
tiring with their mothers, and they build their own fire near the  
hunters' fire and cook their own food and sing and dance, sometimes  
with the hunters and elders, sometimes separately.

882 As youths they are also given increasing responsibility, especially  
in the economic life of the band. They may listen to the discussions  
of the hunters and elders, but even if they make comments, as they  
do, they are not readily listened to unless it is a matter pertaining to  
their age group. Then they are required to be able to voice their opin-  
ions and cite precedents. They are expected to show an adult sense  
[232] of responsibility in matters concerning sex and marriage, and although  
[836] they may flirt quite openly and even audaciously, they never "play  
house," and not until after the *elima* will a girl again show her favor  
[524] by cooking for a boy. Then it is tantamount to an admission of be-  
trothal.

224 After marriage a boy acquires a net. It may be made for him by his  
884 mother, or his father may give him part of his net to which he will  
885 add, with his wife's help. He has already demonstrated his hunting  
561 prowess or he would not be married, but now he is a full hunter with  
[422] additional responsibilities. Whereas economic activity is shared be-  
[581] tween the hunters and youths, it is the hunters who ultimately make  
the decisions concerning camp life, and about the hunt. Where to go  
for the daily hunt, when to move camp, to what region, how to deal  
with threats of physical danger, and how to surmount physical prob-  
lems; such are the questions the hunter has to face. They all concern  
the band as a whole. Nonphysical dangers and problems—that is to  
88 say, moral, psychological and spiritual issues, those that affect the  
561

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nuclear family often before the band—these are more the concern of the elders. As we are here considering the normal run of daily life we are leaving aside special occasions such as the *elima* and *molimo* festivals, which are primarily religious in nature, but in which the hunters and youths play their own distinct parts together with the elders. 88  
561 •

The hunters are generally in the middle of any dispute that occurs, but in a serious dispute it is more likely to be an elder that will be able to effect a settlement. It is, however, the disputes of the hunters that establish the lines along which fission and fusion will take place, and the elders have little influence over this process, nor do they even seem to wish to influence it. They content themselves by using the respect that is accorded them to maintain some kind of balance between the band factions. It is the hunters who initiate both fission and fusion, and who are thus responsible for the composition of the band. Relationships with neighboring bands and with the villagers, insofar as they are determined by band movement, are also largely in their hands, and in this sense the hunters may be considered the political leaders of the band. In this the women are almost, if not fully, the equals of the men. 88  
561  
627  
554  
[562]

The hunter's life is the most active and arduous, and this may in part be responsible for his somewhat disputatious nature. In elderhood there is a chance to relax. There is no shame in an elder having his children bring him back food, and in any case he may be needed to keep an eye on the camp while the hunt is away. It is an age group to which a man or a woman resigns himself with some reluctance, but in which he soon finds considerable satisfaction. He is able to intervene in disputes without fear of physical violence, for one thing, and often does so with enjoyment. The elder is undoubtedly the arbiter, though by no means the only source of solution. From his position of immunity he is able to interfere in the most private and domestic affairs of anyone. Whereas a hunter solves his problems empirically, answering facts with facts, the elder solves those that face him with considered opinion, drawing from a lifetime of experience. A hunter would be laughed at if he could not support an opinion with fact. An elder is never expected to do so, and is consequently admirably fitted to deal with moral and spiritual matters. It is, however, opinion that he offers, not judgment. He will concern himself in questions of the upbringing of children, of their puberty and of their marriage. At any time of major crisis the elder will play the resolving part, though the 888  
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effective. The only indication of band interest in birth is the prohibition against married women procuring abortions, which are known and sometimes practiced among the unmarried girls, though rarely.

As far as the nuclear family is concerned the event arouses considerable happiness, and the mother's female age mates may gather with her to sing a few *elima* songs to celebrate the blessing of motherhood; a childless woman is regarded as the most unfortunate of beings. A few of the younger youths may show some interest, as the new child will before long become their responsibility for protection and instruction. After a few days, when the child is brought freely into the open, the hunters and elders will fondle it and compliment the parents. The father is as proud as the mother, and just as likely to carry the child around to show it off.

Medical precautions are minimal. The mother is likely to be off on the hunt, or on the trail somewhere when birth takes place; there is no lessening of activity for her during pregnancy. Childbirth is said to be effected easily, with complications only rarely happening. Any woman may act as midwife; the father should not be present. If there is delay the expectant mother may be massaged to help delivery, or she may be brought away from the camp into the forest, and sat close to a tree against which she pulls with a vine rope. Within two hours of delivery, if birth took place in the camp, the mother is apt to appear in the doorway of her hut, with a bundle wrapped in bark cloth held in her arms. Within the same period of time, if birth took place on the trail, she will continue her journey.

Although the father is not present at the birth in person, he must be one of his arrow blades, or formerly a wooden or leaf knife made by him, that will cut the umbilical cord. The blade is kept with the cord until the child is old enough to make a bundle of them both, take them to a stream and bury them where they will get carried away by the next flood waters.

There is also knowledge of a custom of couvade, though I did not find anyone who had practiced it. If the birth is slow, the father takes off all his clothes and his sister-in-law washes and rubs him. She then goes to the place of labor, and when the child is born returns to the father, who must make a token gift before he can clothe himself again.

The father, and the mother's brother, if he is in the camp, cut special vines daily and sprinkle their juices over both the baby and the mother, "to make them strong." Some of these vines contain so much

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bull, 1960[1]), I shall keep the description here to those essentials 881  
concerned with the structural implications of the *elima*.

The fact that it is not an individual family affair, to be concealed with shame as best possible, is doubly emphasized when two girls in a band, of quite different lineages, "see the blood" within a few days of each other. There will then be a joint *elima*. And there is also the selection by the girl or girls of the *bamelima*, the friends she likes and wants to accompany her for the duration of the festival, living with her in the *elima* hut. They will be drawn from her female age mates, (561) • and may or may not already have had their own *elima*. If they have not yet seen the blood, participation in their friend's *elima* will excuse them from having one of their own when the time comes. If a girl sees the blood, and a close friend thinks she is about to see it as well, the *elima* will be delayed, perhaps for several weeks.

As with birth, this life-cycle crisis does not evoke any sense of need 881  
for urgent ritual action, protective or otherwise. Its significance is of 182  
a different order. It is regarded as essentially natural and therefore good. Also as with birth, the personal importance of the occasion [778] leads to an establishment of personal contact with the forest, a reification of the direct bond between the individual and the forest world; but the social importance of puberty for the band is recognized, so the band as such takes certain measures, both social and ritual, to mark the occasion.

The girl or girls with blood are expected to keep to their homes and 881  
an extension may be built onto one of their huts, or onto that of any friend or relative who is willing to house the *bamelima*. Every *elima* girl with blood has to choose a personal assistant, and the choice is left entirely to her, and again may fall on a relative, though more often it is a very close friend, of the same age group. They then invite other friends to join them in the *elima* hut, when it is ready. The assistants share such restrictions as are placed upon the *elima* girls, except that they are more free to leave the hut unaccompanied. There are few restrictions anyway, it seems, and they are mainly concerned with maintaining adherence to the schedule of instruction and activities. There are some minor food prohibitions, based on the 881  
personal taboos of the *elima* girls and their assistants, which in turn 262  
are based on their individual reactions to these foods as young children. If a certain food makes a child sick it may be forbidden to him until puberty, when he may try it again and abandon the taboo if it no longer affects him adversely. Sometimes, but not always, there is 881

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way to the forest. If the *elima* happens to be in a village camp, as it sometimes is for part of its duration, the girls will still go away off into the forest to sing their songs. The older men and women say that the festival should be held entirely in the forest, but the younger Mbuti point out that it is an occasion for rejoicing and feasting, and so it is much better to be near a village and eat off the villagers. Even when doing that, however, one is likely to come across broken saplings stuck in the ground alongside a trail many hours from the village camp, showing that the *bamelima* passed by there, "rejoicing the forest." Sometimes they may be heard in their peculiar antiphony with the forest, at other times the saplings appear swiftly and silently a few yards from an Mbuti youth as a sign that the *bamelima* are nearby and should not be disturbed. Sometimes youths, thinking they have left the *bamelima* safely in their hut in a village camp, are hours off in the forest in their usual boisterous, noisy way, and will find themselves attacked and chased by the girls, armed with sticks and whips. [177]

Usually the girls are all together, but every now and then one of the *elima* girls and her assistant will go off together into the forest, and stay there for half a day or more. At such times the others sit around looking dejected, and complain of being deserted. The older women then say that they should not complain, that it is good for the girl to go away sometimes and "converse with the forest." 881

As at birth, there is a certain amount of decoration of the body with what might be considered as forest charms, and toward the end of the festival the girls paint each other with a white forest clay. The personification of the forest, and the frequency with which it is referred to, and the way in which this is done as though its personality were an ordinary matter of fact are another indication of the intense personal importance of the forest in the life of the Mbuti, of its character as a parent, a friend, and a lover, the provider of all things. But it cannot be interpreted as forest worship, for to the Mbuti it is simply a matter of fact. 881  
778  
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One thing that is particularly interesting in consideration of the *bamelima* is that while it is very clearly an age group, it does two things. It does not deny individuality to the *elima* girl, who in fact is constantly displaying it and often causing friction as a result, but it effectively consolidates an age group that might otherwise have been rather lacking in cohesion. Girl's activities are, on the whole, less co-operative in nature than those of boys, and whereas boys are clearly formed into co-operative groups before arriving at puberty, this is not 881  
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quite so with the girls. But by the end of the festival bonds have been forged between the *bamelima* that will never be broken and that will provide a firm basis for co-operative activity throughout their lives.

The other thing achieved is that there seems to be at least a temporary obliteration of the bonds of the nuclear family. The nuclear family has no particular responsibility toward the festival, though they will generally contribute more food than others and may offer shelter, and it has absolutely no authority. Further, although relations between brother and sister are free at all times, it is worth noting that in the *elima* house the girls sleep with the boys of their choice openly and without shame, though their own brothers may be among the boys sleeping with other girls beside them. It is difficult, however, to determine whether or not sexual intercourse, which is permissible at this time, openly takes place under such conditions. I am told that it does.

Neither do kinship considerations seem to play any important role, and certainly no predetermined role, in the instruction of the girls. The only roles that are distinguishable as such are the provider of the *elima* hut, the mother of the *elima*, the father of the *elima*, the assistants and the rest of the *bamelima*.

Of these, the *bamelima* are without question an age group with no kinship considerations. The assistants are primarily close friends and confidantes of the *elima* girls, and seem likely to be related distantly, but there are no stated preferences concerning this. It is said that the father of the *elima* does not have to be a relative at all; his job is to use force, if necessary, to stop the somewhat violent altercations that break out among the attendant youths or between them and the *bamelima*. It is said that the mother of the *elima* is usually an elderly relative of the parental or grandparental level, and that the provider of the hut can be anyone willing to put up with the noise. Table 7a shows the kin relationship between these various roles and the *elima* girls in an *elima* held among the Epulu Mbuti at the end of 1957 and into the beginning of 1958. It also shows the relationship of those senior girls who took the most prominent part in the instruction of the *bamelima*. Tables 7b-d show the same relationships on three other occasions among other net-hunting bands.

Instruction, as already mentioned, is in song, and in such of the arts of motherhood as are yet unknown to the girls. The instructors, apart from the mother of the *elima*, are senior members of the same generation as the *bamelima*, and mostly married, or else they are el-

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ders. Like the "mother," their role is also that of chaperone, however, 881  
for the second most important activity, after song, is the selection of 86  
and sleeping with lovers. 561 •

Sexual experimentation is certainly a major element in the *elima*, 881  
but it is combined with a very definite move to widen the social hori- 864  
zons of the girls, and to direct their attentions into what the parental 867  
and grandparental generations consider proper directions. There are 836  
also certain rules about intercourse in the *elima* hut. The senior girls,  
or instructors, and the "mother" guide the *bamelima* in all this. Their  
decisions are never questioned, and never discussed by the rest of the  
band. It is not until the latter stages of the festival that the parental  
generation takes an active part in the proceedings.

The widening of horizons is achieved by taking the girls to visit 881  
neighboring bands. On such visits they may stay for only a day, or for 836  
several nights, depending on whether the girls find suitable lovers. It 574  
is considered important by everyone that the *elima* house should be  
a place of what is best translated as enthusiastic lovemaking. At first  
it is modest in scale, and, depending on the composition of the band,  
is likely to take place early on and within the ordinary hunting camp.  
The boys who will enter the *elima* hut will be the younger ones, not  
likely to be serious suitors. They may enter only if they are invited by  
a girl, and the girl is forbidden to invite anyone related to her on her 835  
father's side or closely related on her mother's side. Effectively that  
means any descendant of the father's father or of the mother's mother;  
the children of any of the father's brothers or sisters or half brothers  
or half sisters, and the children of any of the mother's full brothers  
or sisters. Invitation is made by the girl, who whips the boy of her  
choice. The girls come out of their hut at regular intervals, during the  
day to begin with, armed with pliable young saplings. They seek out  
and soundly beat whatever boys lawfully take their fancy, if they can  
catch them.

Any boy so whipped is under an obligation, whether he likes it or  
not, to enter the *elima* hut later that day. When he does so he is sub-  
ject to a further beating by the *bamelima*, and even then may not be  
invited to sleep with the girl who first selected him. Unless she gives  
him permission, he may not sleep with her. And if she allows him to  
lie with her, he again has to have her permission before intercourse  
can take place. The men say that once they lie down with a girl, how-  
ever, if they want her they take her by surprise, when petting her, and  
force her to their will.

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became bitter and went far away until they had killed and eaten some-  
one. Their bitterness then left them and they returned and the *ofa*  
ended. The Mbuti archers in this region deny they do this, but agree  
that it is a woman's job to wail. A man's job is to hunt. A man will  
say, "We are glad you are dead, now you can guide us to good hunt-  
ing." (The Epulu net-hunters claim to say the same thing when the  
*molimo* is over.) Some Lesé refer to the same custom as *chachima*.

Over to the east, I found that the Plains Bira have a similar custom  
called *masoso*. Among the Forest Bira it seems to be a part of what  
they call their *molimo*. Again the women of the family are expected  
to wail formally and to exact tribute from visitors coming to the vil-  
lage of the deceased. The men argue about problems of inheritance,  
and conduct the burial and purification rituals.

Among all the villagers it is stressed that any such death ritual con-  
cerns only the family of the deceased. Whatever other similarities  
there may be between their practices and those of the Mbuti in this  
connection, a restriction on participation along kinship lines is not  
one of them. For the Mbuti a death is mourned and grieved by any  
who have reason for feeling a personal loss. This means primarily the  
immediate family and age mates. These are the people responsible  
for the disposal of the body, though others will help if help is needed.  
The band as a whole reacts to the loss however, and it is the responsi-  
bility of the band as a whole to celebrate the death in such a way as  
to restore the normality of life. This is the *molimo*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The wider structural significance of the *molimo* is discussed in the last two chapters,  
"Principles of Organization."

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no further, except to point again to the obvious potential relationship between hunting technology and village exchange; the net-hunters being more easily able to acquire an excess of meat than the archers. However, it is difficult to ascertain just how far this relationship is effectual, for even the net-hunters maintain minimal exchange with the villagers, and only on the same nonformalized individual basis. There is rather more likelihood among the archers for there to exist a *capita* or *sultani* who will convey to his fellow-Mbuti the wishes of the villagers although he has no authority to take any other action, and this may be seen as being due, in part at least, to the less productive technology of the archers, and in part to the greater prevalence of fragmentation into small sub-bands.

DIVISION OF LABOR

There is little to say about the division of labor in Mbuti society, but most important is the fact that there is no religious belief or ritual practice that relates any activity to any one sex, nor is there any consecration of those everyday tasks that normally fall into the jurisdiction of one sex or the other. This, of course, is what might be expected from the personal terminology, which differentiates the sexes clearly only at the parental level. Basically men hunt and make hunting equipment, and organize the *molimo* festivals. The women gather vegetable foods and other forest produce, build the huts, prepare and cook the food; they organize the *elima* festival. Men make bark cloth, women make baskets. Children take part in all the economic activities. But women help make the nets, and they invariably make the twine from which the nets are made. Among the net-hunters the women, girls and young children act as beaters and are thus an integral part of the hunt, as they are among the archers in the archer *begbe* hunt. Men of both archer and net-hunter bands have no hesitation in gathering mushrooms and other vegetable foods when they have the opportunity. In both groups it is primarily and almost exclusively the men who gather the honey, for women seldom climb trees.

Women take part in the *molimo* and, although it is a small part, it is a highly significant one. The *elima*, though organized by the women and stemming from the maturation of a girl, is of equal importance to the male youths who play a vital role in the festival. All in all, sex does not seem to be of any particular significance in determining the structure of Mbuti economic activity. Of far greater significance is age,

561 [433] although once again the general pattern in no way implies an invariable rule.

[854] Infants sometimes accompany their mother on her activities, or are left in camp in the charge of youths or elders of either sex.

561 857 Children who do not stay in the *bopi* to play or to imitate adult activities accompany their parents according to sex; however, boys who cannot do much more than walk will, on the hunt, be more likely to accompany their mother. Children up to the age of puberty frequently prepare meals for themselves, not only in the process of "playing house" but also when together as a group. They go together to the streams to fish or crab, to the forest to gather and maybe to hunt for small or slow game, and together they cook and eat these foods. Older children may also co-operate in building a bachelor hut, though more often they will occupy one that has been abandoned, if they want one at all. But even before puberty they are beginning to help on the hunt, the girls with the beating and the boys with guarding the extremities of the nets.

561 883 After puberty the activities of youths are temporarily closer to those of their parents, causing some friction and disaffection, particularly between fathers and sons. The sibling groups, however, are reunited; youths now have activities and responsibilities comparable to those of their older married brothers and sisters. It is the younger married couples and the older youths who are primarily responsible for hunting and gathering, not only for food but also for the other material necessities of life, such as saplings and leaves for the huts, bark for clothing, wood for the fires. It is also this age group that manufactures, without any other form of specialization, the entire limited range of artifacts that constitutes Mbuti material culture.

561 887 The older couples, widows and widowers, retire with regret but 889 without shame or stigma from communal life, and to the end they 889 will act in divers useful ways, in particular looking after children left in the camp while the rest of the band is off on the hunt. Older people [213] also spend a great deal of their time making the twine used in hunting nets, plaiting vine belts and preparing food. They can expect to be fed by the rest of the band, regardless of its kinship composition, and at the same time they are free to undertake whatever individual hunting and gathering they can. The sick or crippled enjoy similar status, being also unable to keep up with the rigors of the hunt. That such 732 734 people are regarded as a potential danger to society is seen in the legends of old and crippled people who die or who disappear or who

224 dred yards across. However, thirty nets would form a circle, with beat-  
ers, which in diameter could be as much as a mile. Such a large area  
becomes difficult to control and dangerous. Since it is customary for  
[422] nets to be owned only by married men, and exceptionally by a bache-  
[554] lor who has proved himself as a particularly fine hunter, it can be seen  
[162] that a net-hunting band, to be an efficient economic unit, must be  
limited to between six or seven and thirty nuclear families.

224 Insofar as brothers tend to learn to hunt from their father they  
496 make ideal hunting partners, and frequently stand in line in the hunt.  
[593] It is important to know the habits of the hunter next to you, as he  
will be hidden by the undergrowth and his movements must be an-  
ticipated before shooting an arrow or throwing a spear in the direction  
of any game. Even when game falls into a net there is still danger,  
since the smallest antelope is vicious when trapped, and the larger  
animals capable of inflicting serious injury with their teeth and horns.  
A trapped animal has to be killed as quickly as possible, and anyone  
nearby will run to the spot with his spear at the ready. Injuries re-  
sulting to Mbuti in the resultant melee are not frequent, but when  
they occur it is almost always between two people who do not com-  
monly hunt close to each other, and who have misjudged each other's  
movements.

224 However, there is no rule about brothers setting up their nets next  
496 to each other; the order of nets is determined primarily by age, the  
561 older hunters occupying the center of the semicircle of nets, the  
younger hunters at the fringes (conveniently separating fathers from  
their older sons, with whom there may be some rivalry). A young man  
is much more likely to choose to hunt beside an unrelated friend of  
the same age than beside a brother who is much older or younger than  
he is. A dispute in camp may upset the customary order, but generally  
the order, once established, remains fairly constant except for the  
retirement of older men from the center, and the movement inward  
from the younger men at the extremities. Temporary visitors to the  
camp usually hunt near the ends of the semicircle, but older men will  
probably be invited to join those in the center.

224 Magic associated with the net-hunt is slight. If rain threatens there  
789 are a few hunters who will try to blow the rain away by allowing moss  
821 to fall from their fingers while they blow at it and wave their arms in  
the direction they wish the clouds to go. Sometimes a whistle is blown,  
with the same arm-waving. If rain comes despite these activities, there  
is generally laughter, and the "magician" shrugs his shoulders as  
though he expected as much.

THE ECONOMY

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Following is an example of different rules for the distribution of game:

NET-HUNTERS

| Area    | Portion of body         | Given to                                                |                   |
|---------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Epulu   | Head                    | Elders, for wisdom                                      | 224               |
|         | Back                    | Male hunters, for strength                              | 184               |
|         | Private parts           | Children, to help them grow                             | 561               |
|         | Shoulder, liver, heart  | Owners of net, spear, and others who helped in kill     | 602<br>562<br>422 |
| Wamba   | Head                    | Sister or sister-in-law, or to dog if it helped in kill |                   |
|         | Back and forelegs       | Shared all around                                       |                   |
|         | Private parts           | Owner of net                                            |                   |
|         | Rear legs, liver, chest | Owner of net and those who helped in kill               |                   |
|         | Stomach                 | Elders                                                  |                   |
| Biasiku | Head                    | Women, or to owner of dog if it helped in kill          |                   |
|         | Back                    | The woman who carried the animal back to camp           |                   |
|         | Private parts           | Children (who also get other intestines)                |                   |
|         | Forelegs and liver      | Net-owner and helpers                                   |                   |
|         | Rear legs               | Net-owner and helpers                                   |                   |
|         | Stomach                 | Women                                                   |                   |
|         | Chest                   | Net-owner                                               |                   |

ARCHERS

| Area | Portion of body           | Given to                                                                   |
|------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kilo | Head                      | Owner of dog                                                               |
|      | Chest, legs, liver, heart | Owner of dog                                                               |
|      | Back                      | Divided among all                                                          |
|      | Rump                      | Elders, particularly to dog-owner's father, who will then further share it |
|      | Stomach                   | Anyone who might have gone ahead and first put up the game                 |

| Area                                            | Portion of body                                                 | Given to                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 224<br>184<br>561<br>602<br>562<br>422<br>Nduye | Head<br>Back and legs<br>Private parts<br>Intestines<br>Stomach | Women<br>Shared all around<br>Dog-owner (who will give them<br>to the dog)<br>Shared all around<br>Elders |
| Biasa                                           | Head<br>Chest and legs<br>Back<br>Private parts<br>Stomach      | Owner of dog<br>Shared all around<br>Dog-owner<br>Children and elders<br>Elders                           |

224 It will be seen that the only element the various systems have in  
561 common is in the selection of certain categories of people. Women  
[562] are separated from the men among all three net-hunting bands and  
one archer band. The net-owner corresponds to the archer dog-owner.  
Elders are singled out everywhere except at Biasiku, where the hunt-  
ers said they would be obliged to give the elders whatever they  
wanted. Children figure in two net-hunting bands, and only in one  
archer band, where they are coupled with elders.

224 The only kinship relations specified are "sister and sister-in-law,"  
602 which can perhaps be better interpreted simply as "women," among  
the Wamba net-hunters, and "dog-owner's father" at the Kilo archer  
camp, where the hunters were insistent that the rump would be given  
to the father, if alive, for him to divide among the other elders as he  
thought fit. In practice, however, sometimes using a village system of  
kinship obligations, the Mbuti men and women will make claims on  
grounds of kinship. In any case, as stated, the actual sharing generally  
is accomplished to suit the needs of the moment rather than to sat-  
isfy any system, stated or otherwise.

224 The net-hunt can then be seen not only as a determining factor on  
621 the size of the band but also as a major mechanism for insuring co-  
626 operation of band members, and for allowing daily expression of inter-  
594 nal hostilities and providing for their resolution through the highly  
fluid "system" of sharing. While the net-hunt expresses the impor-  
tance of the nuclear family in that the nuclear family is the basic  
hunting unit (the father owning the net, the mother beating toward

554 The various fields in which we can speak of authority fall into three  
121 main categories—economic, ritual, and legal. In the first two, by authority is meant prominence of activity and participation in discussion in what is, generally, a normal situation. In the last category, legal, the situation is abnormal, one of dispute, and by authority is meant prominence in the settling of that dispute. Nowhere does it have any validity unless backed by common assent. Yet it is more than mere influence, for in each field certain classes of individuals are recognized as having the right and ability to interpret the pleasure of the forest.

554 Table 8<sup>1</sup> indicates the distribution of this "authority" throughout  
561 the band. It will be seen that it is evenly divided between the sexes  
562 and among all adult age levels; only the children are not accorded any authority except among themselves. Further, authority is located at one age level or another or with the nuclear family, with few exceptions. For the life crises (excluding birth), authority is divided between the youths and the elders. Youths and elders also share responsibility for the camp while the hunt is away, even if some of the hunters remain behind.

554 There are many examples of Mbuti who have appeared in the role  
648 of leader vis-à-vis the village, but as their authority was nil in relation to forest life, they need not concern us here. Their only function in the forest, other than their normal role as hunters, was to communicate the wishes of the one group of people to the other.

554 The only individual who might be recognized as occupying a special  
156 political position in the life of the hunting band, on any ground other  
522 than age, is the camp clown. He is usually a hunter, and his position  
626 is unofficial, depending on his abilities as an actor and a clown. He  
627 is not appointed, and there is no special name for him or his position.

However, every band seems to have its clown. His function is to act as a buff between disputants, deflecting the more serious disputes away from their original sources, absolving other individuals of blame by accepting it himself. Frequently he will end a dispute simply through the use of ridicule, and although such ridicule may be taken as a form of judgment, the essential point is that once again its objective is to divert attention from the source of the dispute and also to divert blame from anyone who is clearly in the wrong. The major concern of all, except possibly the prime disputants, is that the dispute shall be ended, and frequently by creating or reviving another, lesser dispute the clown brings the disputants into the same frame of mind.

<sup>1</sup>[see page 330-- Analyst]

GOVERNMENT: INTERNAL

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When Njobo was away from the band for a number of months with his son, these two nephews moved in. Normally they were not resident. Asuku brought not only his wife but also his father. He insisted on Njobo's wife looking after them, building their hut and so forth. Although Asuku was not liked, he would have been tolerated had he not tried to assume the status of Njobo, but this assumption moved him into an age group to which he did not belong, and he was consequently always being shouted down. 156  
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On one such occasion, Asuku was annoyed at the hunt for not leaving as soon as he would have liked. He strode up and down, telling everyone that they were lazy. When they shouted him down, he told them he was Njobo's son, so "I am Njobo, and this is Njobo's camp." When he was ignored he then turned from one great hunter to the other, and they all ignored him except one, who placed a stick on the ground at Asuku's feet and said, "There is a stick; if you are so big, pick it up and hit me." Asuku then turned to the elders, and Moké, the most influential of all, laughed in his face. At this, Asuku entered his hut and stayed inside for the whole day until dark. 156  
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On another occasion Asuku tried to say that his net was Njobo's net, and he was therefore entitled to Njobo's position in the hunt and should not be out on the fringes. He had chosen a time when his mother, Njobo's sister, was visiting, and the hunters did not want to make a dispute of the matter in front of her, out of respect for Njobo. However, one of them, Njobo's paternal cousin Manyalibo, went up to Asuku and said that if Asuku wanted that position it would mean setting his net next to him, and if that happened he would set up his net alone rather than stay in the hunt. This temporarily checked Asuku, and that evening old Moké gathered the senior hunters around him and, for once not smiling, he raised his arm and pointed across the camp to Asuku. This is considered a grave indictment, and the whole camp fell silent. Moké, very quietly, and talking as if only to the hunters but never lowering his arm or taking his eyes off Asuku, said, "That is a completely bad man. I have been watching and I have seen with my eyes, and my spirit [roho] makes me speak. He makes noise all the time, and he is the cause of all the noise in the camp. I would like to throw him out forever. But he is a relative of Njobo, and we should wait and see—and watch. That person is a child and has no right to share conversation with men. He is not of us. He comes from far off. I don't like people from far off. They are bad for any camp; they kill any camp completely." He then changed his attention and pointed at Ekianga, the other hunter of 156  
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GOVERNMENT: INTERNAL

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(626)

began more and more frequently to talk from midcamp. Like Asuku, he complained about laziness and bad hunting, common enough complaints but seldom aired from midcamp. When he began to claim special attention by virtue of being Njobo's "son," however, he was promptly ridiculed. People stopped listening to him, even from midcamp, and dared him to name them—a procedure that commands attention. Even unmarried youths called out, "Your noise will kill us all," and children began to imitate his whining voice. Masisi, a cousin of Njobo and, with Manyalibo, about to move from the status of hunter to that of elder, took Mbaaka aside at one point and talked to him quietly, recalling what had happened to Asuku.

Seeing that Mbaaka at last had begun to listen to reason, his brother, who up till then had never interfered, made a loud and rude joke that brought the whole camp down with laughter, then said, "Everyone is crazy—I'm going to sleep," and promptly went to sleep. Masisi then returned to midcamp with Mbaaka and said that if any one else tried to be funny he would turn himself into a villager and bewitch everyone. A youth took up the thread and said that the village was responsible for all the noise anyway, because his girl friend never listened to him any more and was a bad cook (a typical pygmaean non sequitur). This rather forced good humor persisted throughout the next day, with the women telling jokes and laughing loudly the moment the conversation drifted in the direction of Mbaaka's former complaints. There were a few more remarks to the effect that the village was indeed responsible for all the noise, and the rest of Mbaaka's stay (two further months) was unmarred by any repeated claims to privilege through kinship to Njobo.

It is plain, then, that while any movement toward individual authority, conscious or otherwise, is sharply countered, and while individual authority is virtually nil, there is nonetheless a clear basic framework to support the values of the hunting band. There is the division of leadership, according to field, throughout the entire band, yet there is the midcamp site from which anyone may harangue all present. Although he has no means of compelling attention, it is generally accorded, and may be further compelled by pointing to or naming the individuals concerned. Further it is plain that the elders, including those hunters whose position is being gradually taken over by their children, act as final arbitrators, always careful to stress that what they say is a matter of their opinion, or of their heart. Only when unanimity is beyond question is an opinion or an action con-

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[P.218]

CHAPTER 12

## Government: External

### BAND TO BAND

#### 628 Marriage

621 As already seen, the occasions calling for political relationships between one band and another in the forest context are minimal. Insofar as bands can be considered to exist only with respect to forest hunting territory, they cease to exist as political units when in the village, and there even the little interband relationship that pertains in the forest disappears completely.

628 There are basically only three areas of relationship, two of which  
584 might be considered formal, or institutional—marriage and trespass.  
574 The third, probably the most important structurally, is the inter-  
571 family visit. In all three areas there are no recognized or set patterns,  
• 561 each instance being conducted according to the context of the moment. But it will be seen at once that the relationships involved are once again along age lines. Marriage involves an interchange and a relationship between the elders of one band and the elders of another, between the youths of the one and the youths of the other. Trespass involves the hunters. Interfamilial exchange generally involves the older hunters, in my experience, or young married individuals who want on occasion to visit their parents and friends in their old band.

628 If marriage is contemplated between two youths of different bands,  
584 it will be the result of their having met through interfamilial ex-  
574 change, or while in the village. There will have been an exchange of  
[591] visits between the individuals, and when their intentions are made known it is likely, but by no means inevitable, that the family of each will visit the other's band in turn, building their hut close to that of their child's future in-laws.

628 The propriety of the marriage will have been discussed within each  
584 band, primarily by the elders; there is no exchange of this kind be-  
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GOVERNMENT: EXTERNAL

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tween the elders of the two bands unless there is some extraordinary complication, such as the adamant objection of the parental age level of one band or the other. If this happens, then two or three elders, male or female, come to visit the elders of the other band, and when the visit is over they will return, taking with them two or three elders to discuss the issue with their band. There is no privilege attached in such exchanges to either band because of sex; any privilege there might be depends upon the question of territory. Thus the band where the young couple is expected to live and hunt, regardless of whether their child is the bride or the groom, is considered as privileged, and consequently is to an undefined extent under obligation to the other band. However, as the question of residence is primarily an economic factor, depending on the relative sizes of the bands, it is generally settled to mutual satisfaction, and residence is not, in itself, a frequent cause of conflict.

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Elders may be called upon to interact between two bands if the balance of sister exchange is becoming disproportionate. However, this too is essentially a question of economic balance and is only called to count if a band needs to strengthen itself. Again the issue of locality is more important in determining the matter than is the issue of sex. That is to say, in Mbuti society "sister exchange" can also, under certain circumstances, be regarded as "brother exchange," although insofar as patrilocality is the more usual pattern, so is "sister exchange" more appropriate. However, a band that needs strengthening and has just received a bride for one of its members may conceivably demand that the other band execute the rest of the exchange and provide a groom for one of their girls. They can then insist that he come to live with them. The fact that they have gained by both marriages is excused because of their economic situation.

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However regarded, the exchange system is so loose that it is easily adaptable as a mechanism for maintaining hunting bands at economic strength. To this end the hunters have some voice, but it is an issue that is too clear-cut even to call for discussion, and once the issue is considered on grounds other than band size—i.e., the propriety of the marriage or exchange balance—it is in the hands of the elders. But even more is it all in the hands of the two individuals concerned, for although a serious depletion in the size of the band can induce hunters and elders alike to bring great pressure on its youths to marry, they cannot force such marriage. Interfamilial exchange, after all, is a perfectly simple method of increasing band strength, at least tem-

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222 of honeycomb pressed down above it. Two sticks are prepared in this  
789 way by a hunter, and when the cloth is set on fire the hunter waves  
them both in the air. He then hands each of them to a youth, and the  
two youths run through the camp and out into the forest around the  
camp. The womenfolk clap loudly until the youths return and rather  
unceremoniously put the sticks down near the central fire.

222 The honey dance also separates the sexes, the women pretending  
789 to be bees, men the honey gatherers. Yet another separation, sym-  
462 bolizing the power of the women, is the medicine that is said to at-  
825 tune one's hearing so that one can hear the larvae wriggling in the  
[535] honeycombs, high up in the trees. A woman prepares a stick which,  
when blown through, produces a misty spray. She blows into the ears  
of all the men. The men say that the bubbling noise they hear is the  
sound of larvae and grubs eating honey, and that it will guide them  
to the hives.

222 There is seldom any doubt as to where honey lies, and it is plainly  
789 the social rather than the economic importance of the honey season  
561 that is being celebrated. This is most clear in the great *angbe* medi-  
cine, in which the age groups are further differentiated and which  
includes attention to orientation that is quite unique in my experi-  
ence (this, together with several other features, is so singular that it  
cannot be adequately explained at the moment, but is nonetheless  
described for its intrinsic interest).

222 At the *kuma'ngbe* (hearth of honey), a number of youths chop  
789 a special *tembu* wood into kindling (the only time I have ever seen  
561 kindling prepared). Four hunters supervise. The four hunters then  
824 put their honey axes down in the hearth, blades to the center. One  
823 of the hunters lines the axes up so they align with the cardinal points  
372 of the compass. This done, each hunter takes his ax and draws it  
412 toward him, cutting a trench along that line. In this way four  
trenches, two feet long and three inches wide and deep, are cut. In  
the center a square is cut so that the four corners indicate the inter-  
mediate compass points. The position of the sun is consulted to insure  
[821] correct alignment.

A senior hunter has meanwhile cut four lengths of *teka* vine, care-  
fully bound so that its juices do not escape. He removes the binding  
and allows the juice to fill the center square, after which water is  
added to fill the trenches. The combination of juice and water is said  
to be *mota*, or powerful. Each vine is laid in a trench, projecting at  
the extremities. Two youths then take out the vines and shake them

MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

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Two youths then take out the vines and shake them in all directions, liberally sprinkling anyone who happens to be standing by. Other youths are by now standing about, whistling on their honey whistles, a form of *madi* called *singbe*. The kindling is then stuck upright in the trenches, beside the *teka* vines, which have been replaced. Children help with this. 222  
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A hunter then places a single ember, apparently drawn from any fire, in a *mongongo* leaf and, having filled the center square with *mongongo* leaf stems, he places the coal on top. More kindling is added, crisscrossed much like a house of cards, each piece carefully placed by youths and hunters together. Without fanning, the kindling catches and a dense cloud of smoke is given off. An elder then brings over a bundle of old leaves that have been used for collecting honey, and places them near the fire. He waits until the smoke begins to dwindle, then directs the operation of placing the honey axes in the hearth, waiting for the blades to get warm and then using them to split some *toangbe* wood. The *toangbe* tree and the *tembu* tree are both good honey trees, but the *tembu* tree has to grow "old and fat" before it is favored by the bees.

Elders then carefully arrange the old leaves, adding more as necessary, in a large circle around the fire. Four *singbe* whistles are stuck in the ashes of the fire, pointing to the cardinals. While elders stand and shout, women gather and loudly clap their hands, and both hunters and youths kneel on the circle of leaves, facing in to the hearth, and begin pounding their fists rhythmically on the ground. The tempo increases to a maximum and is broken off with a sudden shout. This is repeated twice more, after which the hearth is abandoned and camp life resumes as though nothing had happened. (534)  
(533)

The Mbuti themselves are unable to give any satisfactory explanation of the performance, and it seems to combine elements of genuine magic (for they talk of the smoke attracting the bees and bringing honey to them) and of invocation of supernatural intervention (the *keti* are said to hear the pounding on the ground and will know that the Mbuti want honey). Whatever it may be thought to achieve, however, *angbe* (also *angbelu*) undoubtedly reiterates the division of the band into age groups, a division that is evident throughout the net-hunting season but is not so necessarily a part of activity during the honey season. (782)  
(776)

However regarded, Mbuti magic implies belief and is to that extent religious, no matter how much it may also be thought to have direct causal attributes, and the belief always supposes the benevolence of 789  
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WAYWARD SERVANTS

533 Death songs are normally sung at the death of an adult, male or  
765 female, during the ensuing festival (*molimo*), but some of them may  
be sung at other times of crisis that threaten life, notably sickness  
or poor hunting. Certain songs seem to be reserved for actual death,  
but my impression is that this is a matter of personal attitude, for  
there are other ways in which a distinction is more clearly made be-  
tween what are called the lesser and the greater *molimo*, the latter  
being the festival concerned solely with death.

533 To the same extent that the *elima* songs are of rather more impor-  
462 tance to women than men, so are *molimo* songs considered more the  
881 concern of men. There is, however, no absolute exclusion. On the  
765 contrary, the male youths are an integral part of the *elima* festival,  
which celebrates their puberty just as much as it celebrates that of  
the girls, and although the actual festival is occasioned by the physical  
maturation of the girls, who are then taught the *elima* songs, the  
male youths are needed to sing the chorus to certain of those songs.  
In the *molimo*, at one point, the roles of the sexes are reversed (as in  
*ekokomea*), with the women taking over the men's songs, the men  
sitting back and listening, like women.

533 An examination of Mbuti song form not only reveals areas of con-  
182 cern to the Mbuti, such as their food-getting activities, life and death,  
181 but it also reveals the concern of the Mbuti for cooperative activity.  
Each type of song requires a group of people to sing it, and if there  
is a solo it is sung over a chorus, and the solo is passed around from  
one individual to another. This is similar to the Mbuti rejection of  
individual authority and their concern for dispersing leadership as  
widely as possible. There are certain parts of certain songs that are  
sung by youths, hunters or elders, strictly according to age, and song  
form thus also reinforces Mbuti concern for the age differential as  
an important element of their social structure. The songs are most  
frequently in round, or canon, form, and the hunting songs, in order  
to heighten the need for the closest possible cooperation (the same  
need that is demanded by the hunt itself), are sometimes sung in  
*hoquet*.<sup>5</sup>

533 There are certain similarities between the hunting songs and the  
*molimo* songs, but this is an area that requires a great deal more care-

<sup>5</sup> This is a technique in which each note of the melodic line is taken by a single in-  
dividual who sings that note alone, at the correct moment. The melodic line is thus  
literally divided among the participants (sometimes singing in groups of two or three),  
and the melody can only be reconstituted and heard by the cooperation of all. The  
complications are heightened by the use of canon, and by the use of a harmonic pattern  
which is also sung in *hoquet*, and proceeds clockwise as the melodic line proceeds, as  
always, counterclockwise.

RELIGION

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tled, how good the weather is, and whether or not visiting relatives or friends are expected. Within a few days, however, the festival will begin, and from the moment of its inception its stated concern is to awaken and, even more important, to rejoice the forest. The lesser *molimo* is more often spoken of as "awakening" the forest (*su kongi ndura*), though that too has to be done in a way that will rejoice it. The greater *molimo* should ideally be a festival of sheer joy. The course of the festival becomes more and more a symbolic triumph of life over death, the death of the individual being recognized in the final dramatic stamping out of the *molimo* fire, the fire of life. This is not done, however, until time and time again the fire has been attacked in an effort to destroy it, but has been regenerated by the dances of the men, who in a dance that imitates the act of copulation, with the fire as their partner, fan the scattered fire back into a blaze of life.

It is normally the old woman, who is an integral part of every greater *molimo*, who either by herself or with a girl attacks the fire, dancing through it and scattering it all around. Thus the woman who gives birth to life also seeks to destroy it. She is referred to by no title other than "mother," the same term of address used for the forest in its capacity as giver of life and death. It is primarily the young men who hastily rebuild the fire and fan it back into a blaze with their dance of life. It is frequently said that the women used to possess the *molimo*, but it was stolen from them by the men, and this dance, together with the tying up of the men by the old lady (Turnbull, *ibid.*, p. 323), may well represent in part this early conflict, and the attempt of the women to regain possession of the *molimo*. Whatever the symbolism, it is nowhere clearly stated by the Mbuti, each individual claiming to see something different in the performance. It is generally agreed, however, that it shows how strong the women are, and that they have to be respected by men.

Whether or not there is thought to be any correlation with *pepo* (breath), the power of breath to fan sparks into fire is demonstrated when coals are placed in the end of the *molimo* trumpet. The singer blows as he sings, and the sparks that fly out of the end of the trumpet are greeted by murmurs or even shouts of acclaim.

The trumpet is sometimes referred to as an "animal" of the forest, though this is generally in connection with its morning appearance. Nonetheless it is referred to as needing food and water, and these it symbolically receives. It is also passed through the *molimo* fire and

765 given fire to eat, just as water is passed through it to "cool" it. It is  
392 rubbed with ashes and earth. It is brought into direct contact with  
534 every individual by being passed over their heads as they sit around the  
fire singing, and each individual will at some time or another, at his  
own whim, scoop up ashes and rub the trumpet with them. And in  
[535] the evening appearances of the trumpet at the *molimo* hearth, while  
[831] the singer holds one end to his mouth and sings, the youth holding  
the far end pumps it up and down as he dances in imitation of the sexual  
act, sometimes holding the mouth of the trumpet close to his  
genitals, imitating the part of either man or woman. Little doubt is  
left about the symbolic connection between fire and life.\*

765 There is an important distinction between the evening and the  
561 morning appearances of the *molimo* trumpet, and between the roles  
533 played by different age groups. In the evening the singing is primarily  
in control of the *mangesé*, or elders. Frequently, they have their own  
fire, the hunters have theirs, and the *kiyana*, or male youths, have  
theirs. Everyone joins in the singing, the elders maintaining over-all  
control and the hunters being the most prominent singers, except for  
the *molimo*-trumpet singer, who may be a youth or a young hunter,  
being chosen because of his ability as a singer rather than for any  
other reason. It is the youths that do most of the dancing at their fire

[535] or at the central *molimo* fire (from which theirs is made by taking  
burning embers and setting them separately). The whole intent of  
the evening is to rejoice the forest, and this is done by singing through-  
out the night, and by eating a feast specially prepared from food con-  
tributed to the *molimo* hearth. (Just as with food, so with firewood  
and with fire itself—every single household in the camp is expected to  
contribute.) In the early days of the festival the old lady does not ap-

[535] pear, and there is no attempt to stamp out the fire, though erotic  
[831] dances are constantly being danced around and over it. It is only to-  
ward the end of the festival that the nightlong songfest is drama-  
tized by the appearance of the old lady, her dancing through the fire  
in an attempt to destroy it, and her tying up of the men (referred to  
as both tying up the hunt and tying up the *molimo*). The evening  
765 meetings of the *molimo*, though full of the joy the Mbuti wish to  
convey to the forest, are nonetheless solemn in that the purpose is

[831] \* Fire is primarily connected with women; the hearth is often referred to as the vagina; the association of blood and fire is considered particularly dangerous. Thus the association of the male *molimo* trumpet with the fire and the ashes gives the trumpet phallic significance in this context. Elsewhere, this precise symbolism seems unimportant, the important factor being simply the trumpet's masculinity.

[P.268]

CHAPTER 15

## Principles of Organization (1)

### 121 THE FOREST CONTEXT

While reaffirming our introductory belief that this single-band study is the first essential in the wider study of the Mbuti hunters and gatherers, and that such a study cannot warrant generalizations of wide or final value, some generalization is obviously called for and must now be made to provide a basis for future comparative studies. While we have, in the section on "The Forest World," outlined the nature of Mbuti activity in domestic, economic, political and religious life, insofar as it is lived by the Epulu band of net-hunters, we now have to draw this picture together in an organizational framework. Within this the principles discerned should be specific enough to explain the unity and integrity that plainly persist despite the remarkable degree of flux, and at the same time be general enough to have wider application beyond this specific situation.

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602 In the absence of central government it is customary to look for principles of organization in the kinship system of a society, and although the society in question does not conform to the expectations of Steward (1955) or Service (1962), and although its departure from their norm of patrilineality<sup>1</sup> cannot be demonstrably shown to be due to "evolution" or even to changes wrought by the influx of village cultivators, there is still much to be gained from a study of Mbuti attitudes to kinship. Embedded in their terminology, simple as it is, are attitudes expressed in behavior in all realms of their life.

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• [561] We have seen how little emphasis is placed on kinship, except at the level of the nuclear family, where there is a strong affective element between young children and parents. This is most clearly seen in the terminology of interpersonal address and reference, which is

[114] <sup>1</sup> Service was more perceptive in shifting the emphasis from lineality to locality, but his generalizations still lack substantiation.

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of the generational type, dividing Mbuti into age levels that cut horizontally across the vertical lines of lineage. This terminology recognizes four age levels, but is misunderstood if thought of as a means of relating one generation to the next. Although *miki* can be correctly translated as "child," *apua'i* as "sibling," *eba* and *ema* as "father" and "mother," and "*tata*" as grandparent, these terms are not obligatory in address, and are used only where convenient in reference, or where it is desired to emphasize the age differential (for instance, in discussing activities specific to one age level or another). To use any one of these terms to address or refer to a person of a different generation, far from stressing kinship bonds, stresses generational separation. Even *eba* or *ema*, outside the affective nuclear-family usage, is generally a way of expressing distance, and may sometimes imply attitudes such as hostility or at least reproof.

Having stated what the terminology is, one has obviously to go further and look more closely into its actual usage, rather than be content with simple translations. In practice, the terms refer not to degrees of kinship at all, but to conditions of life: childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age. Of all the terms, the only one that effectively creates interpersonal bonds that are recognizable in daily life is the term *apua'i*. As with all the other terms, it is classificatory in the widest possible sense, extending even beyond bilateral connections to include equally affines or unrelated friends. Effectively, then, rather than "sibling," it should be translated "age mate." However, the English familial term is more pertinent in that it conveys something of the affection involved in the Mbuti relationship, and the intimate degree of unity.

The term *apua'i*, obviously, is used at each of the four age levels between members of that level. It is used widely, constantly, and always affectively, never with reproof or hostility. To address or refer to someone as *apua'i* is to indicate that all is "quiet" between you. Quietness (*ekimi*) is always associated with *apua'i*, whereas noise (*akami*) is invariably associated by any one age level with any of the others—that is to say, any crossing of the levels is liable to produce *akami*. The ideal state is quiet, or *ekimi*, therefore the ideal relationship is that pertaining between *apua'i*. Interlevel relationships (particularly those between adjacent levels) are spoken of not only as producing *akami* but also as being *mota*—strong, powerful, difficult, inclined to be hot, and therefore dangerous though not necessarily bad.

602 If we forget the usual genealogical associations of kinship and think  
• 561 in a strictly classificatory manner, we do have here an institutionaliza-  
121 tion of a kinship relationship and the beginnings of a kinship system,  
for we have already seen the vital importance of age in determining  
one's realm of activity and responsibility among the Mbuti, and  
how each of the four levels of *apud'i* act together in distinction from  
the other levels. But there seems little point in persisting any further  
with the term "kinship system" in this instance unless we define kin-  
ship so as to contradict its very fundamental significance in the more  
highly structured societies. With the Mbuti we are dealing with kith  
rather than kin, and the terminological division of the society into  
four age levels is best thought of as completely divorced from kinship  
except, and it is a vital exception, insofar as the nuclear family, and  
the ideal relations that should pertain among its members, are taken  
as the model relationships for the band. With this in mind, let us  
examine other relationships implicit in the terminology.

601 It is noticeable that the terminology distinguishes age levels, and  
561 only distinguishes between the sexes at the parental level (*ema* and  
562 *eba*). Children, siblings and grandparents (in their widest classifica-  
tory sense) are considered without emphasizing any male/female  
polarity. Sex differentiation can be made, and where necessary this is  
done, but only in the same rather roundabout way in which any  
genealogical connection can be traced. In order to differentiate an  
*apud'i* who is merely a friend from one who is a uterine brother, one  
has to add the expression "from one stomach" to designate the latter.  
Similarly, one can add the terms designating male or female to any  
term of address or reference except that of mother or father, where it  
is not needed.<sup>2</sup>

562 This avoidance of sex differentiation is consistent with the inter-  
462 dependence between the sexes that is so characteristic of Mbuti eco-  
nomic life, and with the egalitarianism that exists between them in  
the realm of government. A woman is in no way the social inferior of  
a man, and there is little absolute division of labor along sex lines.  
[224] Among the net-hunters in particular, and among the archers during  
[222] the *begbe* beat-hunt, cooperation between the sexes during the hunt

[193] <sup>2</sup>I have come across instances where a vowel or consonant change has been said to  
indicate the sex differential (as happens in some Sudanic Languages), such as *tata* and  
*tate* for male and female grandparent, *apud'i* and *amud'i* for male and female sibling,  
but there was no consistency in the practice. Wherever it was necessary to make the dif-  
ference, there was need for stress, and this was in any case better achieved by the more  
dramatic addition of *moko* or *kali*. At the level where this most frequently is done, a  
male child would thus be distinguished from a female child: *miki a moko*, *miki a kali*.

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group—be it the sub-band, the band, or even the total Mbuti population—as a politico-economic unity. The situation is somewhat analogous to the more common lineal patterns, where a people see their ultimate unity in descent from a common ancestor; the Mbuti find their unity in their common dependence upon the forest.

Taking care not to become involved in issues of causality, we can now see the structural implications of this lack of concern with actual kinship, for it alone makes possible not only the nonlineal nature of the band but the fluidity of its composition. But here we have to introduce another factor, the absence of which would lead to the rapid disintegration of the corporate nature of the band. In the absence of the continuity provided by any kinship system, particularly under the condition of flux we have described for this Mbuti band, continuity and corporateness are seen in terms of territory. We have pointed out that the band can be defined only in terms of territory, the individuals forming that band changing from month to month; perhaps even this is implied in the personal terminology which, as seen, differentiates the sexes only at the parental level in terms of the family hearth—the most basic territorial unit of all.

The system also indicates a lack of concern with problems of superordination and subordination. Even problems are resolved in the forest context by the use of relative age. Their resolution is only truly difficult in one vital context, once again the forest-village relationship. It is consistent with the essentially egalitarian nature of Mbuti social behavior, and it successfully avoids lending any support to the assumption of individual authority on grounds of lineal seniority, which authority would again destroy the essential cooperative unity of the band.

The non-lineal nature of the band itself calls for some explanation, and now we are in a better position to understand it, for we can see clear structural elements that are only obscured when seeking to find principles of band organization in terms of kinship. The terminological system reflects as neatly as could any diagram the essential principle of age. This is the one factor it emphasizes above all others, except the common Mbuti unity as *bamiki ba ndura* (children of the forest). We have seen throughout our description of Mbuti forest life how activity and responsibility are regulated according to age level, and the terminology clearly indicates where one's loyalties lie. Such loyalties are entirely incompatible in so small a cooperative society with

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602 the crosscutting vertical loyalties of a lineal kinship system. The ter-  
621 ritorial band is the only reasonable answer.

602 We use the term "territorial" rather than bilateral, for the latter  
621 term still overemphasizes considerations of vertical descent. This is  
• 561 to negate the whole functional value of the generational system as  
121 used by the Mbuti, who use it to establish firm bonds between age  
mates, and to assign different and essential tasks to different age lev-  
els, thus avoiding the remotest chance of centralization of power or  
[114] authority. But we certainly do not use the term as does Steward  
(1955, 143), who uses it "to designate certain primitive societies  
which consist of many unrelated nuclear or biological families." Stew-  
ard implies that relationship (he does not state what degree of rela-  
tionship) not only is of no concern, but that it does not exist between  
member families of the band. It would be difficult to find a more com-  
posite Mbuti band than that of the Epulu, yet a glance at Table 4,  
giving the band membership at the close of 1957, shows that every  
single individual, representing some twenty-two different lineages, is  
"related" by clear consanguineal or affinal bonds to every other. No  
individual stands alone, though the relationship may sometimes be  
remote.

621 And most certainly while stating that age and territory are more  
602 effective principles of organization than kinship, we do not deny that  
121 kinship is recognized. We are merely stating that social interaction  
582 among the Mbuti is based on generation and territory. A system, to  
deserve the term, must be effective in action, and we have seen how  
seldom kinship relationships are called into account among the  
Mbuti, the major occasion being a proposal of marriage. There the  
concern with kinship is not so much in terms of the politico-economic  
implications of the marriage, as a clear-cut consideration of lineal dis-  
tance. The stated prohibition is against marrying on the side of either  
the mother or father, but so long as the memory of the elders can  
trace no connection, there is no further concern.

58 Sister-exchange marriage preserves the unity of the *apua'i*, and in-  
621 deed enhances it when, as can happen in the composite band, the two  
602 couples reside side by side. The lack of marriage and divorce ritual  
[561] does not indicate any lack of concern for one's age level, for one al-  
ways marries within that level and so is never lost to it, but it is an-  
other symptom of the general lack of concern with kinship, this time  
with affinity rather than lineality. A marriage is effected by living to-  
gether; divorce is effected by one or other spouse simply going to live

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elsewhere. If this is taken to indicate a lack of concern not only for kinship but also for social stability, it can also be regarded, precisely because of the freedom it allows, as a further mechanism by which the constant flux so characteristic of the band is maintained. That this flux itself has a function will be seen in the final chapter, when we deal again with the Mbuti/Villager relationship.

The different functions of each age level have been described (pp. 110, 111, 112 seq.), and the organizational value of making the horizontal distinction in the composite band is self-evident. Each age level is cooperative in activity, certain activities (such as the hunt) calling for cooperation between two or three age levels still preserving the distinction by allocating different roles to each. Interpersonal relations are determined primarily by age level, and authority has also been seen to be diffused through the different levels.

The transition from childhood to youth is marked for boys and girls alike by participation in the *elima*. Adulthood is conveyed by the act of marriage, which carries with it the right to own a net. The rare bachelor who proves himself as a great hunter and still does not marry may, by combined virtue of his age and his skill, own a net, but the accepted qualification is that of marriage, emphasizing another major Mbuti concern, that of procreation.

Transition from adulthood to elderhood is less clear-cut and more filled with tension, for though an elder enjoys many privileges and has, set aside for him as such, certain vital roles in the social organization, he misses the excitement of the hunt, the pride and satisfaction of rearing a family, and he certainly recognizes that this is the final transition.

The nonlinear (or cognatic) band, then, divided horizontally into age levels rather than vertically into lineages, effects an absolute unity throughout each level, whereas it would otherwise be divided into as many sections as there were lineages. Its persistence and continuity are seen in terms of territory. There may well be a tendency for certain lineages to remain within the same territory for successive generations, but such association is incidental rather than structurally determined. The demography and internal organization, while allowing for marriage within the band, make it essential for much marriage exchange to take place between different and preferably not adjacent bands. Since the residence of the newlywed couple is determined by immediate economic considerations, such as the relative size and composition of the two bands, territory is obviously not an individual

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Indeed, certain elements of the forest system can only be explained in relationship to the village context, such as the excessively fluid composition of the band and the almost paranoid attitude to a single villager passing through a hunting camp, sufficient to suspend the vital and central, all-important *molimo* festival, even at its height, or transform it into a village-style parody. This quite singular feature has found no explanation in terms of either the village alone or the forest alone. Let us then briefly review the forest system, and look at it again in the village context. The following elements have emerged as having the greatest structural significance:

1. THE BAND is the basic unit, its membership being influenced by economic rather than kinship considerations. Constant association and cooperative compatibility outweigh kinship even within the band in regulating the process of fission and fusion. This latter process is related to the annual honey season, but it is not determined by it. The over-all size of the band, or of its subsections, is, however, determined by ecological factors resulting in a maximum of about thirty nuclear families for a band, and a minimum of three families for a subsection. Although the band is nonlineal, the network of consanguineal and affinal interpersonal relationships is recognized to link all members, so that the terminology, while referring to age levels regardless of actual or fictive kinship, still has the same affective qualities of kinship terminology, the term referring to age mates (*apud'i*) being the most widely used, and the most effective.

With the best will in the world, it is not possible to apply the kind of analysis suggested by Lévi-Strauss (1958) for following his argument (that the biological family makes a poor starting point); further we must also abandon the affinal family and the system of affective relationships that Lévi-Strauss saw to pertain there. For among the Mbuti affective relationships are determined more by age than by kinship, consanguineal or affinal. We simply cannot follow a set formula that takes no account of the age factor. Thus  $f/s$  is positive when  $s$  is a child.<sup>1</sup> It is negative when  $s$  is a youth, becomes less strained when  $s$  becomes a hunter, but only approaches positive again when  $f$  becomes an elder. In other words the relationship is positive as long as  $f/s$  are not in adjacent age levels. The greatest friction arises when  $s$  approaches adulthood and is about to become a hunter, a signal for the retirement of the father into elderhood. It

<sup>1</sup>  $f$  = father;  $s$  = son;  $m$  = mother;  $d$  = daughter;  $b$  = brother;  $z$  = sister.

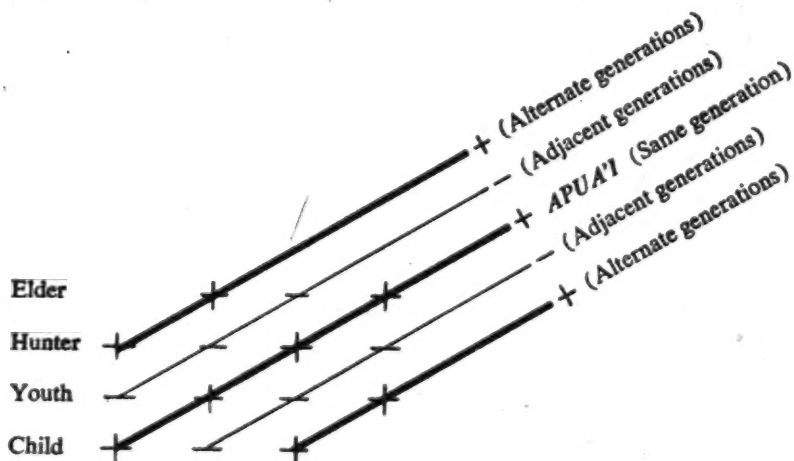
602 would be difficult to notice much difference in this respect between  
121 *f/s* and *mb/zs*.

561 *b/z* and *h/w* are both positive, though *b/z* swings to negative  
571 briefly at the youth's age level, friction being an inevitable potential  
593 of the sister-exchange practice, loose as it is. *m/s*, almost as uniformly  
positive as *h/w* throughout all changes in age level, might be said to  
reach a double-positive stage when *s* becomes a hunter, and is cer-  
tainly pronounced during his youth—just at the time, in fact, when  
his relations with his father are at their worst.

If we consider the age factor we get something like the following  
(allowing for the fact that there is no very precise way of determining  
attitudes, particularly among the somewhat volatile Mbuti):

|                           | <i>mb/zs</i> | <i>b/z</i> | <i>f/s</i> | <i>h/w</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| When <i>s</i> is a child: | +            | +          | +          | +          |
| youth:                    | -            | -          | -          | +          |
| hunter:                   | -            | +          | -          | +          |

602 Or, if set out in a different form, considering only age, the thick  
121 lines joining positive relationships, the thin lines joining those points  
561 at which the relationships are negative, we see most clearly the cor-  
593 respondence of attitudes to age. Only when the sex difference is con-  
sidered—i.e., allowing for negative *b/z* and positive *m/s*—is the  
symmetry spoiled.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> The system, and the results, might be considerably improved by replacing the inflexible positive and negative signs with a scale analysis.

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Despite all of which, and the lack of structurally significant rules of inheritance of property or status (names sometimes being handed on down to alternate generations, but not necessarily so), and with no apparent concomitant inheritance of status, certainly not of property, there is a recognition of the patrilineage, and a tendency toward patrilocality.<sup>3</sup>

2. AGE is the prime factor in dividing the band into significant units, the significance being seen in terms of domestic, economic, legal and governmental responsibilities. Each age level has a distinct role that contributes to the total social order, and in all these aspects of life it is consistently of greater import than kinship. The consistency still remains as firm in religious life, and following the ultimate crisis of death. The dead belong, as it were, to yet another age level, and one that is almost dissociated from the four levels of the living. Thus after death there is no familial concern for the dead, as seen in the complete lack of concern with ancestral ghosts. Far from disclaiming the dead relatives through fear<sup>4</sup>, the Mbuti continue to regard them with affection insofar as they regard them at all. Their preference for forgetting the dead reflects an attitude toward death, not to the individual dead.

Each age level has its own way of earning the respect of the band as a whole, by fulfilling what is referred to as its "duty." Thus the duty of children is to grow up in good health. The duty of youths is to sing, flirt and play—and help the parental level. The duty of the hunters is to hunt and, oddly enough, to create *akami*, or noise, and the duty of

<sup>3</sup> We have to assert that there is, for the moment, no evidence that the territorial band is a product of special considerations, as suggested by Steward and Service (in whose terminology the band is "composite"). In particular we must reject, for the Mbuti, the assertion of Service (1962, p. 49) so convenient to his argument for virilocality, that all such societies were, before they were "so thoroughly subjugated," characterized by fighting between "unrelated groups," resulting in "fears, dangers and enmities." Also it is necessary to deny his assertion that such societies are "enclaved among more powerful neighbours—and cannot but lose or be heavily punished for any breach of the peace." If anything, in the Ituri, it is the villages that are enclaved. Further gross misrepresentation, perhaps owing to paucity of reliable material, is offered by Service (1962, p. 108) in the bald statement: "The composite band, on the other hand, is obviously a product of the near-destruction of aboriginal bands after contact with civilization. In all cases there is conclusive evidence of rapid depopulation by disease which, when combined with ending of hostilities among the aborigines themselves under the dominance of the common enemy, resulted in the merging of previously unrelated peoples." The evidence now available, while not denying the possible validity of such historical reconstruction, in no way supports it. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary.

<sup>4</sup> For an example of precisely the opposite situation, see Beattie (1960, p. 76), where concern for kinship obligations during life is continued after death, resulting in a desire to disavow relationships.

• 561 the elders is to restore *ekimi*, or quietness, and also, following their  
88 alternate generation, to play and sing, if in a somewhat different manner. The elders may also flirt.

Above all, each age level has its own responsibility in the total band economy.

621 3. TERRITORY is the principle by which the band, divided horizontally by age, sees its unity vertically, through all four generational  
561 levels. Territory, represented by the hearth, recognizes the divisions  
[594] of the band from the nuclear family, represented by the family hearth, to the four age levels, represented by the different hearths at the *kumamolimo*, for youths, hunters and elders (children remaining by the family hearths). Territory, represented by an area enclosed by  
621 recognizable boundaries, defines and is the symbol of unity of  
131 the band. In its widest extension, the forest itself, territory forms the basis for the unity of all Mbuti in their common opposition to the village world. The village world is frequently referred to as *indenji aku*,  
[648] or in the lingua franca, KiNswana, as *inchi ingina*—directly translated as “another territory.” Each band has its own *indenji*, and inter-marriage between noncontiguous bands is preferred because of the rights it conveys, each to the other’s territory. The Mbuti themselves say it is good to have relatives (friends) in many camps, for then one  
628 never “walks emptily” (*tamba bulé*). One of the great *molimo* songs  
602 is “*me tamba bulé*”—“I am walking emptily.” The importance lies not in the initial or future residence of the married couple, but in the exchange relationship established by their marriage, enabling individuals or families of each band to exchange visits with members of the other, never having to “walk emptily.”

621 For the Mbuti territory in its widest aspect, as the forest, also represents the spiritual source of their entire being, and effectively operates as the ultimate sanction of social behavior.  
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822 4. NOISE, or *akami*, is another element of structural significance, and must be considered in relation to its counterpart, *ekimi*—quiet. Noise is recognized as having considerable practical significance, such as its effect in scaring away animals. This can be desirable or undesirable, depending on the situation, and so can noise be desirable or otherwise. Ultimately, however, noise kills, and so generally is to be avoided. It may be used in times of danger or crisis for protective purposes, and apart from shouting to frighten away wild animals while on the trail, the Mbuti also whistle to stop all human sound, in

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Let us look, then, at these same structural elements, having just considered them in their forest context, and place them in a village context.

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1. THE TERRITORIAL BAND, while in no way lessening the efficiency of the hunting band, and while still preserving band unity through the concept of territory and the use of an age-level system, presents to the village system only disunity and flux. The flux that is a natural part, it seems, of the seasonal fission and fusion of all Mbuti bands renders it next to impossible for any form of village authority to be exerted over the Mbuti, either as bands or as individuals. The preference of the Mbuti for marrying into distant bands, and of thenceforth maintaining an exchange of visits and even of membership with these bands, directly counters the authority of the villagers, which is based on localized lineages and is therefore itself localized. The Mbuti are as likely as not to exchange visits with each other over distances that exceed not only the territorial limits of the clans of the village tribes but even of the tribes themselves, between which there are no political relationships except hostility. In view of the lengths to which the Mbuti carry the joking relationship, if it can be called that,<sup>6</sup> it is not surprising that they find it convenient to maintain their bands in such constant and otherwise unnecessary flux. The Mbuti constantly raid village plantations, openly ridicule the villagers, and steal from under their noses, unless the villagers are particularly generous. I have not met a single villager, even among those most popular with the Mbuti, who has not complained of being "eaten," and complained at the same time of the impossibility of applying legal sanctions over tribal boundaries.

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2. AGE divides the hunting band into significant horizontal sections crosscutting all lineal considerations.<sup>7</sup> The emphasis on age is con-

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<sup>6</sup>The Mbuti in their own parlance regard the village as a place to hunt and eat. They say "in the forest we hunt, in the village we hunt" (*subandura su wendi, subananji su wendi*), also, equally frequently, "We eat animals, we eat villagers" (*Sule banyama, sula Batubonji*). Hunting calls for trickiness, cunning, using tactics appropriate to the game, often imitating it and assimilating, temporarily, its personality. Such tactics in the village include bringing in a certain amount of meat as bait, performing some service, and occupying a generally subservient position. When asked why he forced his son to take part in the *nkumbi* initiation at the hands of the villagers, one father said, simply, "When we hunt elephant we cover ourselves with elephant dung" (*Su wendi bambongu su pati mavi nda'bo*).

<sup>7</sup>Turner (1957), following Gluckman (1954), finds among the Ndembu, a society that is mobile and fissionable, also lacking the more formal political institutions, an essential crosscutting of opposed groups. He also found, as we have found, that (Turner 1957, p. 289) "... links of kinship and of political and economic co-operation per se

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sistent as a major principle of organization in all realms of Mbuti life, with a consequent lack of interest in lineage. This adds both to the compositeness of the band and to its fluid structure. The division of authority renders the band, at any stage of its existence, without the slightest trace of individual leadership other than fictive to which the village headmen or chiefs could relate. Even more important, it means that the band has no constant kin grouping by which it can be related to the village unilineal descent group claiming hereditary ownership over a comparable Mbuti group. The comparable Mbuti group only exists in the minds of the villagers, and functions among them as an institutionalized means of regulating intervillage disputes over Mbuti "ownership." The effect of placing a horizontally divided hunting band in a vertically divided village is fragmentation. The only effective relationships, even when the Mbuti happen to be in a village where their *kpara* resides, are interpersonal. The loyalties that the Mbuti feels toward an age group are negated by the lineal loyalties of the villager, and conversely.

Again the Mbuti employ the joking relationship to their advantage. They invoke claims upon *kpara*, *karé*, and "kin" without the slightest compunction, but when the same claims are reversed, they either deny or ridicule them.

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3. TERRITORY, which acts in one respect as a focus of band unity, is the only principle that also, in this limited respect, offers any measure of consistency in intergroup contact. Thus while the villagers in any given village may never be sure of just which Mbuti they will be dealing with in the adjacent hunting territory, they are always able to look to that territory for *some* Mbuti. There is, in fact, a reasonable continuity within the band, achieved by territorial considerations, and this helps stabilize relationships with the neighboring village to some extent. But in its wider extension, as the forest, territory only serves to unite the Mbuti in common opposition to all villagers.

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4. NOISE is associated with the village, and noise is associated with death. The term *akami* is used together with the terms *bulé* or *tupé*

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are insufficiently strong to hold together village and nation." The "consciousness of national unity" (*ibid.*) that exists among the Ndembu nonetheless is, according to Turner, because that unity is moral rather than political, its source lying in the value system.

In considering Mbuti society we have to think of opposition within the forest society, such as that created by the age-level system, and within the total society, such as that created by the "kinship" system. At each level there are indeed opposed groups, with crosscutting membership. The absence of a common value system between forest and village, further, is accompanied by a corresponding absence of a wider unity.

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widely practiced in the mimetic hunting dances, by which it may be supposed that the dancer is trying, magically, to influence the action and movement of the game. In this light the Mbuti acceptance of the *nkumbi* seems more plausible, as a "magical" means of gaining power over the villagers. It is not entirely unlike the situation described by Beattie (1960, p. 78) for Nyoro reactions to foreign powers such as Europeans, Polish expatriates, and airplanes. The Nyoro attempt was to gain some control over the situation by becoming possessed by the spirits of these foreign powers. 197\* 18 186 224 188 189

There may also be a certain amount of seepage of village beliefs into the Mbuti subconscious, despite the formidable structural opposition they have raised to all such influences. There is certainly cause to think that the village beliefs of witchcraft and sorcery, confused as they are by the Mbuti, nonetheless have for them a certain sinister ring of conviction.<sup>9</sup> 197\* 754

It is perhaps for that reason that the only plainly discernible symbolism evident in Mbuti ritual is concerned with life. Of all the oppositions between the forest and the village, such as abundance/hunger, unity/disunity, moral/immoral, equal/unequal, cool/hot, song/silence, quiet/noise, the most significant are undoubtedly the last two, for silence and noise are associated ultimately with death. If the Mbuti suspect there are, in the village, supernatural powers with which they should come to terms, it is for purposes of defense. And they see their major defense in the power of their own supernatural, the forest. 197\* 76 182 (76) (78)

Their desire is to counteract the forces of hunger, disunity, immorality, inequality, heat, silence and noise, forces that amount to death for the Mbuti. Their focus of attention is on the preservation and continuation of life. The relatively simple ritual, if it can truly be called that, of the *molimo* festival is supercharged with an emotional concern, a burning desire, for life. As might be expected, it reinforces those aspects of Mbuti society that require constant attention: age divisions are clearly symbolized in the three fires for the three upper age groups; the value of sharing (on nonlinear grounds!) is emphasized in the technical division of the songs, again bringing in division along age lines and demanding close cooperation; the reluctance to share is symbolized at the same time as the friction between youths 182 761 765 561 • (578)

<sup>9</sup> Again, a linguistic study might help greatly, not only through separating institutions and concepts that derive from different tribes, but in revealing the location of hidden areas of forest/village opposition. Unfortunately we still lack any published studies of KiNgwana, KiBira and KiLese, let alone of the diverse Mbuti groups.

182 and fathers when youths go around trying to snare food from each  
761 hut (the women ultimately letting them have it, often ostenta-  
765 tiously). The opposition of adjacent age levels, and particularly the  
• 561 hostility between sons and fathers, is plainly manifest in the morning  
718 rampages of the *molimo* trumpet. The forest itself is symbolized by  
[913] the leaves that conceal the trumpet (itself the symbol of the life-  
giving organ), and *ekimi* is the avowed objective sought through song.  
*Akami*, its antithesis, is symbolized again in the morning rampage,  
frequently a physical battle between older and younger youths (di-  
viding brothers) and between youths and hunters, and always a wordy  
battle, with the hunters winning if for no other reason than that there  
is a limit to the energy even of Mbuti youths.

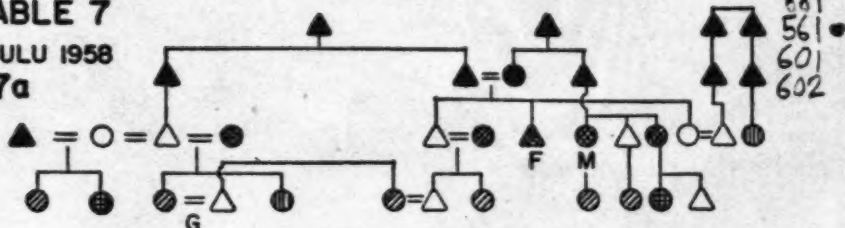
182 Thus the *molimo* admirably reinforces social values and allows for  
761 the harmless expression of hostility in areas of conflict. The only sym-  
765 bolic representation of sexual conflict is *ekokomea*, and of course the  
831 fire dance. But here the symbolism runs deeper, and concerns the  
392 ultimate end, for just as *akami* is associated with death, so is *ekimi*  
associated with life. The fire is not as realistically symbolic as the  
trumpet, though it is undoubtedly as feminine as the trumpet is  
masculine. But it is impossible not to be reminded of other instances  
of the use of fire and sex symbolism.<sup>10</sup>

761 And perhaps we should see this concern with life not only in terms  
181 of the threat of death from the village. Death is a threat to all soci-  
eties, and for the Mbuti it is probably the one imperfection in an  
otherwise perfect life; that is to say, it is the one thing for which they  
have no certain answer, and to a practical people such as the Mbuti  
uncertainty is imperfection.

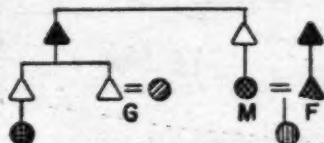
\* 177 Ultimately the efforts of the Mbuti, if not of their system, are di-  
rected to keeping the villagers physically out of the forest, an effort  
that is successful largely because the villagers are only too thankful  
\* 177 not to have to go into the forest. But just the fact that one villager  
754 can set up a fishing camp in mid-forest and be visited by other villag-  
ers, or that a chief can send his representative to a hunting camp to  
demand (but not necessarily obtain) meat, means that even the forest

[171] <sup>10</sup> For instance, Audrey Richards (1956) writes of the Bemba that access to the an-  
cestral spirits is to be had through the correct handling of fire and sex, and stresses (*ibid.*,  
p. 30, seq.) the ritual association of sex, blood and fire as the *idés maitresse* behind most  
of the ritual behavior of the Bemba. Hocart would certainly have seen the *molimo*, and  
the "baptism of fire" (when Moké passes his hands through the flames and rubs them  
over his face, then gently touches the hands of all those around), as a request "for the  
gift of undying life" (Hocart, 1952, p. 47).

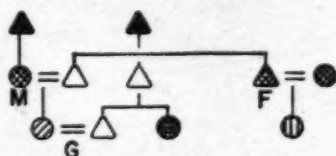
**TABLE 7**  
**EPULU 1958**  
**7a**



**7b**  
**EBOYO**  
**1958**



**7c**  
**EBIANI**  
**1957**



**7d**  
**KOKI**  
**1958**

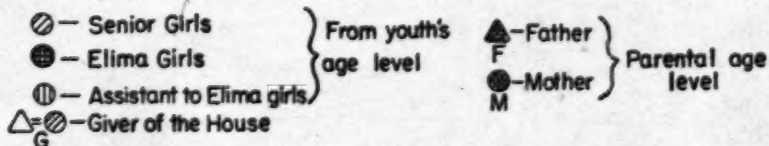


**TABLE 7a-d elima participation**

TABLE 8

621 FIELDS OF AUTHORITY

561 1. Economic

554 Hunting

Gathering

Honey collecting

Exchange with village

Industry (manufacture of material possessions)

Camp supervision (in absence of the hunt)

(Joint male/female authority among the net-hunters)

2. Ritual

Birth

Puberty, betrothal and marriage: the *elima*

Death: the *molimo*

3. Legal

Conjugal harmony

Individual disputes (personal insults, abuse, failure to share food or property, etc.)

Group disputes (any of the former that become enlarged beyond the realm of those directly concerned)

| Nuclear Family | Youths | Hunters | Elders |
|----------------|--------|---------|--------|
|                |        | △       |        |
|                |        | ○       |        |
|                |        | △       |        |
| △○             |        |         |        |
| △○             |        |         |        |
|                | △○     |         | △○     |
|                |        |         |        |
| △○             |        |         |        |
|                | ○      |         | ○      |
|                | △      |         | △      |
|                |        |         |        |
| △○             |        |         |        |
|                |        | △○      |        |
|                |        |         | △○     |

Thus distribution of authority according to age and sex is almost equal as follows:

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Family:  | 4 |
| Youths:  | 3 |
| Hunters: | 4 |
| Elders:  | 4 |

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| Male:   | 12 |
| Female: | 11 |

7

## The Play World of the BaMbuti

181 IN THE FOREST life appears to be free and easy, happy-go-lucky, with a certain amount of perpetual disorder as a result. But in fact, beneath all that there is order and reason; reaching everywhere is the firm, controlling hand of the forest itself.

861 If individual responsibility and authority are shunned and dis-  
561 persed in other aspects of Pygmy life, as in the maintenance of law  
601 and order, a similar pattern appears in the upbringing of children. It is no accident that a child calls everyone in the same age group as his parents "father" or "mother"; those still older are called "grandparent." Those of the same age as himself he refers to by a

THE PLAY WORLD OF THE BAMBUTI

term which could be translated as either "brother" or "sister," and anyone younger is "child," though more often they are just called by name. In this way a Pygmy camp is much less formal than most African societies, where there are not only different terms of address and reference for different degrees of relationship, but also correspondingly different modes of behavior that are enforced at all times. 861  
561  
601 [621]

During the day one Pygmy camp looks much like another. The sun filters down through the trees and brightens the camp with shafts of spiraling light as it catches the columns of smoke drifting lazily upward. This is what makes a camp look so full of life at midday, even when most people are out on the hunt and those that have stayed behind are dozing in the shade of their little leaf huts. The light has a life of its own, and after it has danced down the coils of blue smoke it seems to leap from place to place on the leafy floor of the camp as the trees sway in the breeze high above. And when you listen you hear life in myriad forms all around—birds, monkeys, bees; the rustling of a nearby stream and the never-ending voice of the forest itself. It continually whispers assurances that all is well, that the forest is looking after its children. 000 [512]

In a village the heat of day is unbearably, suffocatingly oppressive, but in the forest it is just warm enough to make you want to stretch out and bask in the dancing, shady sunlight, like other living creatures. But the Pygmies have learned from the animals around them to doze with one eye open, and a sleepy midday camp can become filled in a minute with shouts and yells and tearful protestations as a baby, crawling around this warm, friendly world, gets into a bed of hot ashes, or a column of army ants. In a moment he will be surrounded by angry adults and given a sound slapping, then carried unceremoniously back to the safety of a hut. It does not matter much which hut, because as far as the child is concerned all adults are his parents or grandparents. They are all equally likely to slap him for doing 512  
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MOLIMO: THE DANCE OF DEATH

was given special recognition by Moke, who offered him his chair and then sat on the ground beside him. Old Tungana seemed to know him well too. The elders—the *mangese*, the Great Ones—formed a tight cluster of their own, apart from the hunters. The hunters formed their own group, and the youths theirs. The youths and a few of the hunters danced, and we were surrounded by women and girls who watched and joined the songs with handclaps. The girls formed their own dance circles, but they seemed to be dancing with much more purpose than on other nights, and they were allowed to stay up much later. Then they were sent to bed, and the singing began in earnest. All the girls who had danced went into Kondabate's hut, and as they opened the leaf door to enter I saw that the old woman was sitting inside, hunched up over the fire, her eyes as bright as the coals, wide and unblinking.

The singing went on particularly late that night, and it was only an hour after Moke's usual statement that he was tired that we were awakened by the blasting of both molimo trumpets as they entered the camp. I got up hurriedly and saw that Kenge was already gone. At the door of my hut someone ran up in the dusk and pushed me back, telling me not to come out, it was too dangerous. Just as he said this, there was a tremendous blow on top of the hut, and the molimo swept by. It was surrounded by at least twenty youths, all, as far as I could see, carrying long branches with which they beat on the roofs and walls of every hut. They continued this for an hour, the trumpets blaring angrily, the youths making loud hunting cries. As the forest grew lighter I could see that all the youths were decorated with leafy branches stuck in their belts, so that it looked as though each trumpet was surrounded by a little forest of its own.

Quite a number of huts had been damaged, but there was no word of protest. Ekianga danced up and down with a spear under each arm and ran rings around the trumpets. I was more impressed than ever by the high-stepping gait that he and everyone else used. They did

P  
583 Sometimes Pygmies THE FOREST PEOPLE  
829 talked about the system of bride-wealth used  
177 by the villagers, and sometimes they wished that they could use the  
C same system. But for the villager the woman is a laborer in the fields  
583 who can cultivate crops that can be sold for cash. From the village  
462 groom's point of view it is important to make a satisfactory payment  
as it not only enhances his prestige but also gives him the assurance  
that his in-laws will be on his side, not wanting to have to return so  
much wealth should their daughter change her mind. For the Pyg-  
mies this is unworkable. To them a woman is more than a mere  
P producer of wealth; she is an essential partner in the economy. With-  
583 out a wife a man can not hunt; he has no hearth; he has nobody to  
462 build his house, gather fruits and vegetables and cook for him. So a  
[581] group that loses a woman looks for a woman in return. The Pygmies  
extend the term "brother" or "sister" so that it can be applied to  
P almost anyone of the same age group, however distantly related, and  
[601] this means it is seldom impossible to find someone to exchange, and  
[561] someone who is willing. But sometimes a little coercion is needed. So  
it was with my friend Kenge.

P  
583 Kenge often laughed at the villagers, and at the way they sponsor  
177 Pygmy weddings, even paying bride-wealth to each other—the  
186 "owner" of the groom to the "owner" of the bride. He found it  
C particularly funny when such a marriage broke up, because the two  
563 Pygmies considered it a mere flirtation, and the villagers then had to  
583 fight over the necessary restitution of wealth. But he wished he had  
been able to use the system to get himself a wife.

P  
581 He was deeply in love with a particularly attractive young girl  
593 named Maliemo and badly wanted to marry her. He had three sis-  
ters, but one was married to Masimongo, one was still too young,  
and the third was unwilling. Yambabo, the unwilling one, was a very  
determined girl, as stubborn as Kenge himself. She was quite fond of  
Maliemo's brother, a slim, light-skinned youth called Taphu. But  
nothing in the world would make her admit it once she saw that  
Kenge wanted to use her in order to get Maliemo.

Mbuti

Zaire FO1

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ever, a one-way process; no Negress could endure the pygmy way of living, and none of them ever marry pygmies.

The interplay between Negroes and pygmies may be illustrated by a number of examples in which they disagree on historical facts. The Negroes say that the pygmies once went naked, like animals. The pygmies hotly deny this, and assert that they always wore loin cloths. The Negroes admit that they themselves were once cannibals, but say that the pygmies ate more human flesh than they did. This too the pygmies deny; they claim that they never ate human flesh except when the Negroes gave it to them.

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In addition to the exchange of food and, formerly, protection, which form the basis for Negro-pygmy interaction, there is another activity which helps to cement their relationship. The Negroes have a circumcision school, of the usual Negro variety. This school is held about once in four or five years. There is no specific interval; it is probable that they wait until there are enough boys ready to form a class of the right size. These boys are anywhere from nine to fourteen years of age. Now the pygmies associated with these Negroes may send their boys through this same school with the sons of their hosts. Thus, the pygmy boys are away from home several months, are in close association with the Negro boys, and are taught the same secrets that the Negro boys learn. At the end they are all circumcised together, and their parents come to the Negro village to dance and get drunk with the parents of the Negro boys.

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The pygmies are thus age-graded like the Negroes. Each class has its own cheer, or song, as in American colleges. Each class also has its own name, such as "Hurricane" or "great army worm," depending on some event

[P. 325-A]

Mbuti

Zaire FO1

3  
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which occurred during its period of isolation. This not only forms a strong bond between the pygmies and their hosts but it gives them a formal sequence of age grades in their own society. There are no special scarifications or other insignia for each class; it is a common experience to hear one person asking another, when strangers meet, "What class were you in? I am a Hurricane," and so forth, just like Harvard alumni asking each other what class they were in, and whom they knew, over a drink.

### PYGMY LOCOMOTION

481

The pygmies are very expert at getting about through the forest, and especially at moving swiftly through the thick undergrowth that a white man would have to chop down with a machete before he could enter. To a Negro, a white man trying to get through seems clumsy. To a pygmy a Negro seems clumsy. Schebesta observes that the small size of the pygmies makes them better adapted to locomotion in the forest than the larger Negroes and whites.<sup>1</sup>

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[186]  
P  
[42]

The pygmies jump over fallen logs, and make their way using hands and feet—hands to toss dead branches and trunks aside. They can actually run through this tangle, and while so doing they sometimes pick up fallen logs and throw them so they will crash at a distance, to mislead pursuers, or game which they are stalking.

They are also very expert at climbing; the children practice this from babyhood. Their technique is far from simian, but a widely distributed method, similar in principle to that of a lumberjack. The climber cuts two

P  
[113]

<sup>1</sup> Schebesta, P., *Revisiting My Pygmy Hosts*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1936, pp. 78-79.

[P. 325-B]

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• 561  
[888]  
Government.—There are no chiefs, councils, or any other formal governing bodies in a pygmy camp. In making any decisions concerning the whole camp, two factors are involved. The first of these is respect for older people.

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[626]  
A pygmy will always, in addressing a man of an older age group in any formal situation, call him "senior"; he will listen respectfully to an older man and will always obey any reasonable orders he may give. If a younger man shows disrespect, the other members of the camp will gang up on him and berate him. This respect for age, and for the opinions of wise old men, is the basis of pygmy government.

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[888]  
Secondly, while the opinions of most of the old men are respected, every man in the camp is entitled to state his own views on any subject. Thus, during the evening talking time, the pygmies will discuss whether to move camp, where to move it, and why; or whether to go net hunting, and where to hunt. The discussion has no leader and may go on for several evenings. Finally the men who are shouting out different opinions will come to an agreement and the decision will be acted upon.

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[828]  
[562]  
In general it is the older and more experienced men who make the decision, but as some of the old men are considered eccentrics and freaks, little attention is paid to them. Rather, it is an oligarchy of the more respected among the old men, a body with no formal membership or specific composition. In their decisions the pungent remarks of the women also have a considerable influence.

#### 594 PYGMY SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Families and their extensions.—  
The smallest normal social unit in a pygmy camp is the individual biological  
[P. 334-B].

594 family; that is, a man, his wife, and their children, if any. This group will occupy one hut together, and its personnel is normally fairly stable.

596 Each biological family belongs to a  
614 larger family group or extended fam-  
602 ily. All the families within a family group are closely related to each other through the male line. That is, each family group will consist of one or more closely related old men, and his or their male descendants and their families. It is these old men, from all the family groups in a camp, who together form the "ruling" age grade.

• [561]

621 Ideally, a pygmy camp consists of a  
614 number of these family groups descended through the male line from a common ancestor, for whom they are named. Therefore, the basic pygmy camp is thus a classic gens, or, in looser terminology, a patrilineal clan.

582 The families and family groups are  
594 strictly exogamic, and the clan is also  
596 exogamic if all members live in the  
614 same camp. If, however, it is scat-  
621 tered, the exogamy is not too strictly enforced, although a pygmy will never marry anyone to whom he knows himself to be related, on either side.

614 The pygmy camp.—Although this  
621 is the formal, ideal situation, the composition of the camp is complicated by the presence of visitors from other camps who belong to different clans and can be married. So it can be seen that the clan and the camp are not, in practice, synonymous.

621 Pygmy camps are not all the same size; there is a minimum and a maximum number of people who can live together as a cohabitive group, owing to their needs of hunting, and so forth. Fifty huts is about the limit, with from twenty to forty the optimum, and twenty-five the average. Each hut

[592] contains one man, his wife, or wives,  
[621] and a few children, so that one hundred and fifty might be an average number  
[P. 335-A]